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Quake was a battle, this is war!

REVEALED
UNREAL 2
A NEW REALITY

FIRST LOOK PREVIEW

MAGIC & MAYHEM

THE ART OF MAGIC

The Lords Of Chaos return in 3D

TESTED
DESPERADOS
Wild West Commandos -
we play latest code

REVIEWED

SERIOUS SAM

F1 RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

FREEDOM: FIRST RESISTANCE

EVIL ISLANDS

THE MOON PROJECT

NBA 2001

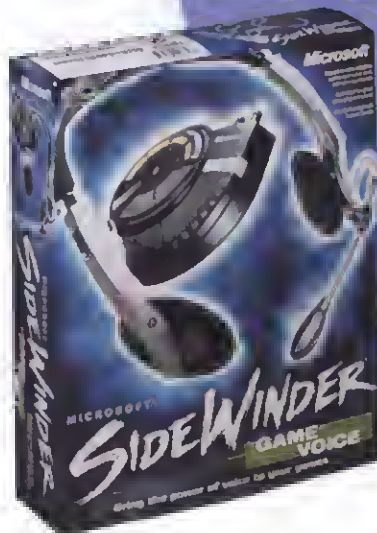
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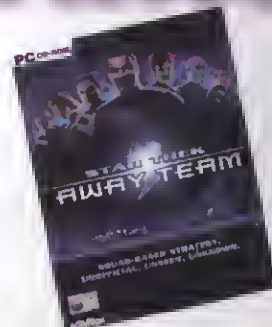


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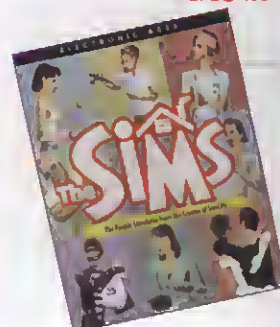
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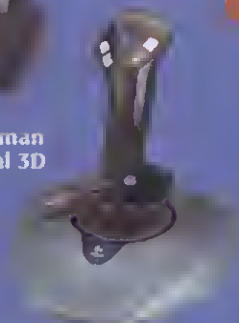


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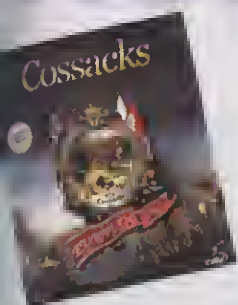
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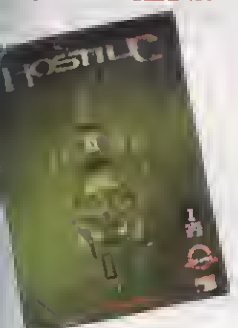
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**WIN THE
TOP 10
PC GAMES**
SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS
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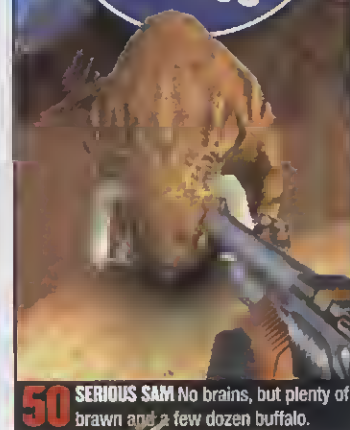


40 EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE One month to go and it's looking good.

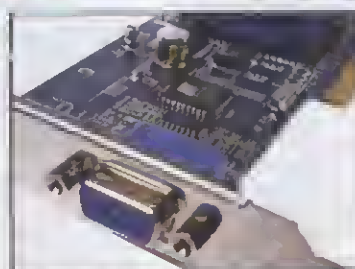


30 TRIBES 2 Big maps, big guns, big ships and bots with big brains. Forget about *Team Fortress 2*, for the time being at least, and soak in the future of the team shooter.

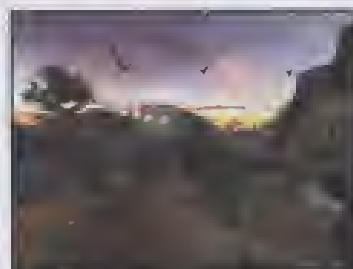
**WIN!
CAPTAIN
ZOD'S PC**
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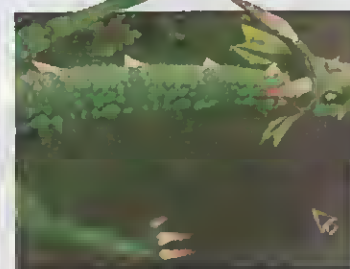
50 SERIOUS SAM No brains, but plenty of brawn and a few dozen buffalo.



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Big-time multiplayer action.

“The graphics are excellent, multiplayer has been improved, and all the elements that made the original so addictive have been retained”



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AND

GIANTS:

CITIZEN KABUTO — SEA REAPER DEMO

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END ZONE

Just when you thought the mag had ended... blimey, a whole lot more!

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WIN!

THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to **The Compo No One Finds (102), PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Thursday April 5, 2001. The winner of our Mar (issue 100) cover compo was Anthony Goddard of Oxford, who wins something from the ZONE prize cupboard for sending in the correct answer to our last little teaser.

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92%

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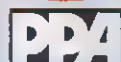
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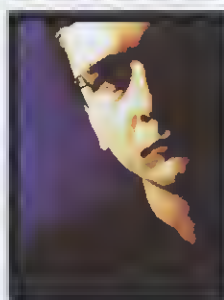
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Is the PC dying? Is the PC dead? It's all we seem to hear these days, and yet in terms of power there's still nothing that can touch it. Check out our 3D card round-up on page 108 for news on the latest 3D accelerators, along with a sneak look at the new GeForce3 chipset.

Funnily enough, I recently got the chance to play with the new GeForce chipset, along with the latest playable code for Bungie's *Halo* a couple of weeks back. I was in America for Microsoft's Gamestock event and the Bungie stall was predictably packed all afternoon. They wouldn't allow me to play with a keyboard and mouse though. Instead I had to use a bulky controller and two

analogue sticks to kick alien behind. "Erm Sir... Have you played a first-person shooter before?" I was asked. "Yes" I hissed through gritted teeth as I bounced my way down a tight corridor, wheeling around as if someone had reversed my mouse in *Counter-Strike*.

But I wasn't fooled. The Xbox developer's kit is basically a PC with an Xbox controller stuck in the middle. I could tell because it kept crashing. "And when are you releasing this on PC?", I countered hopefully. "Erm Sir... We're concentrating on Xbox right now," he answered. "Because I've heard from some people that it's going to ship a couple of months after Xbox, but someone else told me it was going to be anywhere between six months and a year. In fact

"So is the PC dead? Nope. It's stronger than ever, but it's now spawned a bastard cousin, complete with funky green crosses"

I've heard wild rumours that the game isn't going to be released on the PC at all." A cunning ploy from the boy Woods. "Erm Sir... We're concentrating on Xbox right now." OK.

The sad thing is, *Zoo Tycoon* and *Flight Sim 2002* aside, there wasn't any new PC stuff on show at Gamestock. I attended a discussion that was entitled The Future Of The PC, and expected an in-depth dissection of the impact Xbox was going to have, and how Microsoft was going to scale down PC entertainment. Instead I got a few blokes talking about dumbing-down games for the mass market, and how *Myst* was an 'amazing' game as it had sold several million copies. I was starting to get a bit worried, although it could have been worse - he could have used the word awesome.

I probably shouldn't have expected anything else. Xbox is a huge release for Microsoft and it's obviously concentrating on shipping out a strong batch of titles for launch. And things weren't all that bad - the PC line-up was still stunning, if not exactly a surprise.

So is the PC dead or dying? Nope. It's going stronger than ever, but it's now spawned a bastard cousin, complete with funky green crosses all over it. I don't know if this will change things, but if we don't get *Halo* on PC I'm going to personally hitch a ride to Seattle and camp outside Bill's house until he's got a decent explanation for me. And it'd better be good.

Dave Woods
Editor



TOP STORY



All these screenshots are taken from the game's technology demo. We'll have to wait a while for proper gameplay.

YOU WON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES, IT'S UNREAL 2

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Legend Entertainment

PUBLISHER Infogrames

WEBSITE www.legendent.com

IN SUMMARY

The sequel to one of the biggest names in the business, *Unreal* offers an in-depth single-player experience as well as an enhanced multiplayer mode that continues the brilliance of *Unreal Tournament*.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

Half-Life was a watershed title that changed shooters forever, and while *Unreal* was released before it, the sequel has taken many of its ideas on board. The settings are wildly varied and stretch the newly tweaked engine to its limits, while the new multiplayer modes could really take the online community by storm.

The sequel to one of the biggest first-person shooters ever is on its way. For real

★ **TELLING THE TRUTH** Mark Hill





Unreal was always a thing of beauty.

The new large-scale terrain system makes outdoor environments breathtakingly impressive.



Alien worlds are recreated in fine detail and populated with living creatures.

Some levels will go back to basics with labyrinthine dark corridors.

Although universally acclaimed when it first appeared more than three years ago, *Unreal* is now thought of more as a great engine than a proper game. The visuals were fantastic for their time, but the single-player experience soon lost its charm. It was by no means a bad game, but it was the kind of title that appeared empty and unrewarding once the all conquering *Half-Life* came along. But the quality and success of *Unreal Tournament* have made this one of the most anticipated shooters around. And when you take a look at the first lot of images that have started to trickle out of Legend Entertainment's studio you can see that this is going to be something special indeed.

Although it's officially the sequel to *Unreal*, it is in many ways also the natural follow-up to *Unreal Tournament*, since the multiplayer side of the game is going to be just as important as the single-player mode.

The story has you partolling a sector of the galaxy during the 24th century keeping the peace with your crew of pilots and engineers. The old 'objects scattered across the universe' device puts the action in motion. Your job is to go down to the planets or enemy spaceships to find the objects and show off your shooting skills. This means the setting for each mission can be completely different from the last, and Legend will be able to show off the power of the freshly

colourful explosions. The actual mission objectives will also change every time, and will range from escorting civilians, rescuing hostages – missions not usually seen in sci-fi shooters of this ilk – defending bases or attacking enemy ones with the help of other soldiers fighting by your side and even stealth levels where you need to infiltrate facilities undetected.

As with any shooter, the weapons are all important and include

“The actual mission objectives will change every time, and will range from escorting civilians, rescuing hostages, defending bases or attacking enemy ones”

modified *Unreal* engine swapping the wide open spaces of an alien city in ruins for claustrophobic underground caves and back again. Each world will be populated by the indigenous people, so you can banish from your mind all those empty areas from the first game, full only of light shows and

flamethrowers and leech firing guns as well as the usual arsenal of rocket launchers and sniper rifles we've already enjoyed in *Unreal Tournament*.

The multiplayer game offers a single-player tier mode as well as the proper online chaos, so you're



Ⓜ Ugly sod, isn't he? Wouldn't say it to his face though.

definitely going to get your money's worth. All the traditional modes are here (Capture The Flag, Deathmatch, Last Man Standing) as well as a few surprises that should add a greater tactical depth to the gameplay. In fact, you could almost call it *Team Fortress* in space, as you'll get to choose among three classes that will determine your abilities and be able to build turrets, force fields and repair robots and even reconnaissance droids. It sounds too good to be true. A lot of people criticised both *Quake III* and *UT* for completely abandoning the single-player story-driven experience, but *Unreal 2* shows that you can have both. With *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and *Duke Nukem Forever* also vying for our attention, this could be a very good year for FPS fans. **PC**

TOP STORY



In some missions you'll have to shoot down planes. If you're lucky you might even pilot some.

WAR IS HELL, WITH A LITTLE BIT OF HEAVEN IN

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Winter 2001

WEBSITE www.talonsoft.com

IN SUMMARY

It's the sequel to one of the biggest games of 1999. *Hidden & Dangerous* was real enough to make the war believable, but fun enough to make it a boyhood *Guns Of Navarone* fantasy. The sequel will build on all those elements while bringing some original ideas too.

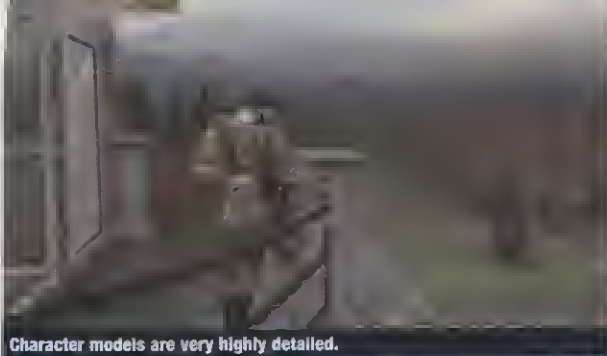
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The original seemed to be rushed out to meet deadlines, and was consequently a bit rough around the edges. This time the developer is spending as long as it needs to bring out a really polished product. Plus you can now drive all the vehicles and even take prisoners. Believe us, it's gonna be big.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

The hardest, greatest and most addictive tactical shooter was bound to get a sequel. This is it. Really

★ CAMOUFLAGED Mark Hill



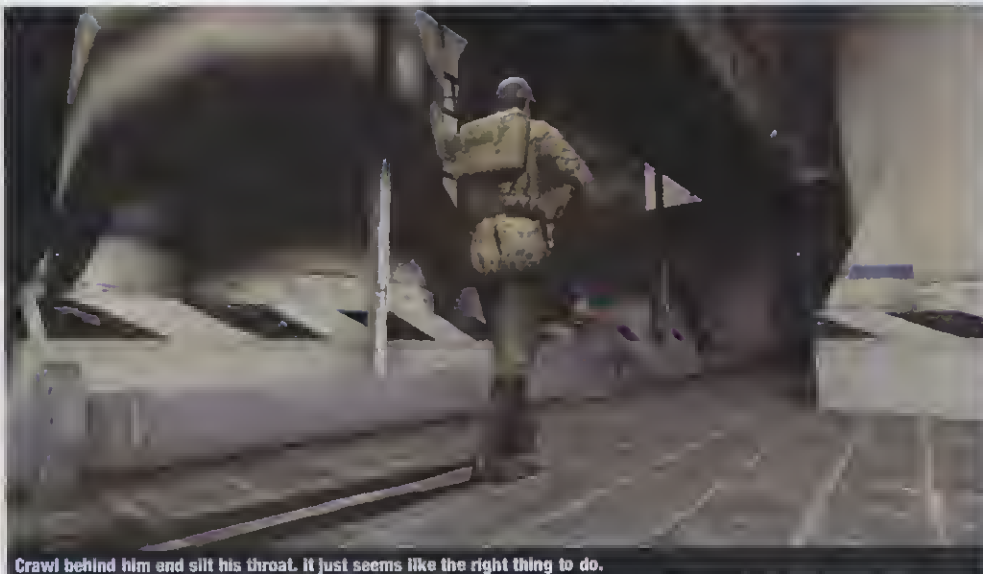
Character models are very highly detailed.



If you thought the original was good, this will make your jaw drop.



Better keep an eye on that vehicle.



Crawl behind him and slit his throat. It just seems like the right thing to do.



The AI has been programmed to walk away a lot.

Spec Ops and *Rainbow Six* might have got there first, but it was *Hidden & Dangerous* that really established tactical shooters as a force to be reckoned with. Despite an astonishing number of bugs – our favourite being the one where you are lying down, only to fall through the sky – and the fact that staying alive for more than a few minutes was a serious achievement, *H&D*'s epic scope and razor-sharp gameplay stayed in your memory and kept you coming back for more. The sequel is a chance for developer Illusion Softworks to iron out all the problems and add a ton of new ideas.

As in the original, there is no proper plot as such, simply a string of missions set across Europe, and scenarios that will be familiar to all who have ever watched a war film. At the same time, each of the characters in your platoon has his own story that evolves through the game. The hero is

Major Gary Bristol, whose personal vendetta against an SS officer drives much of the story and leads it to a larger-than-life conclusion.

This time round you can hire soldiers from outside the usual pool of French peasants, American action heroes and British bobbies, with special operations teams from India and the like joining the war effort. Moreover, as well as controlling a team of four soldiers, there will be up to six non-player characters you'll be able to interact with and give orders to.

A lot of work is going into the enemy AI, making sure they react realistically to everything you do, and forcing you to play every situation intelligently rather than an all-guns-blazing approach. At the same time, Illusion will need to keep them dumb enough to make the game playable. Just imagine if *Project IGI* had had super-smart soldiers. It would have been impossible.

There are 23 missions spread out over nine campaigns, which, if they're anywhere near as tough and intense as the levels in the first game,

much improved, with the addition of maps designed solely for LAN and online action, as well as the traditional co-op mode. The idea is to

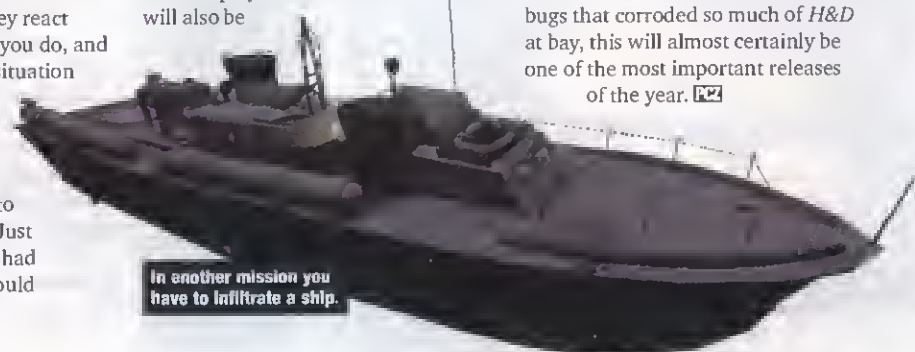
“A lot of work is going into the enemy AI, making sure they react realistically to everything you do, and forcing you to play every situation intelligently”

could keep you going for months. You can now take prisoners and drive all the vehicles you come across, including planes and gliders.

Multiplayer will also be

have about 20 players, but instead of each one controlling just one soldier, you'll be able to command a squad of four plus two dogs (no, really).

If Illusion Softworks can keep the bugs that corroded so much of *H&D* at bay, this will almost certainly be one of the most important releases of the year. **[E2]**



In another mission you have to infiltrate a ship.

TRUE ORIGINALS

NEWS EDITOR Mark Hill



I like ranting against the lack of originality in games. In fact, I do it so often that it's starting to sound a bit tired and, quite frankly, unoriginal. But it only takes a cursory glance at this month's news to see that the industry is still cannibalising itself in order to make a quick buck. We've got more sequels (*Star Trek: Armada 2*), add-on packs (*Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal*, the *Voyager - Elite Force* expansion), as well as the straining of overused licences (*Star Trek* again, with the Borg Assimilator, *Star Wars* with *Battleground* and *Battle Of The Planets*). The situation really is enough to make anyone with any sense despair. Not that we should complain too much. After all, these games are going to sell because they are big, established brands - as much as Coca Cola or Nike. So when we put them on the cover we know that the magazine is going to sell, too. What a cold, cynical and disgusting world we live in.

Thank God *Black & White* is finally out and that it really is as fantastic as we all hoped it would be. It's one of the few true original games we've seen in years, so much so that no one really understands it until they've played it themselves. A lot of people in the industry are probably hoping that it falls flat on its arse and doesn't sell very well, partly because of the oh-so-British hatred of other people's success (also known as envy), and partly because such an innovative title threatens to make the whole house of cards totter by showing people the true possibilities for games.

In other news, I will no longer be doing news. I've decided to quit the high life down in the PC ZONE dungeon and dedicate my life to swimming with dolphins. Or something. So thank you, and goodbye.

TECHHEAD

The latest and greatest hardware news

P.19

THE PCZONE CHARTS

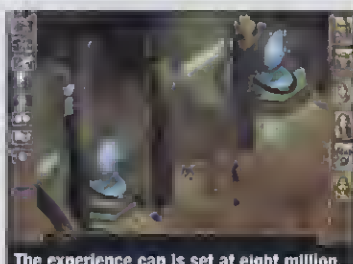
What's in, out, up and down

P.20

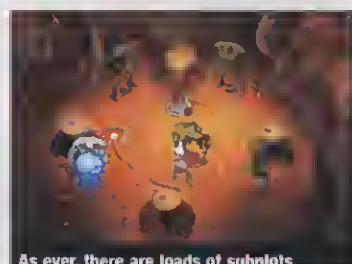
ChartTrack



The Bhaal saga will finally be closed. For good.



The experience cap is set at eight million.



As ever, there are loads of subplots.

BALDUR'S GREAT

Bioware announces a most welcome expansion pack for the brilliant *Baldur's Gate II*

★ Bioware • ETA spring • www.bioware.com

Just in case the 200 hours of gameplay in *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn* didn't quite fulfil your need to spend nights hunched in front of your monitor gibbering about shadow thieves and dark elves, then get out the Prozac because the sequel, *Throne Of Bhaal*, is about to hit the stores.

The expansion will wrap up the child of Bhaal storyline started in *Baldur's Gate* and continued in *Shadows Of Amn*, and also inject the package with great new weapons and absorbing locations. Of particular note is a large dungeon called Watcher's Keep, which will contain a horde of legendary artifacts, and if it's anything like Dulag's Tower in the *Sword Coast* you'll probably spend a lot of your time dying there.

You start the game in your stronghold in the Abyss, from where you will find out more about your powers. These have been

considerately passed on by Bhaal, god of murder, and will open up new areas to explore. One of your abilities involves being able to summon one of your favourite characters from *Shadows Of Amn*, who will greet you as if they'd never left your party. *Icwind Oale* established the coolness of being able to create or import your own party right at the start of the game, which is also available in *Throne Of Bhaal*.

The game will also introduce a number of new abilities, a new Wild Mage character kit and spells of biblical proportions, including the Storm Of Vengeance, which has the potential power to cause more carnage than ever seen before.

And just in case you were panicking that this might be the end of the series, the developers assure us that *Throne Of Bhaal* just wraps up the Bhaal saga - it's certainly not the last we've seen of *Baldur's Gate*.

WAITING TO HAPPEN

Smokey, we're waiting for you

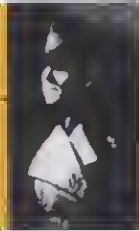
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MAN WHO KNOWS

The latest industry gossip

P.16



HOTSHOTS

Some gorgeous Operation: Flashpoint screenshots for your delectation

P.26



EXPANDED VOYAGE

The popular *Elite Force* is to receive its first add-on pack

★ Raven Software • ETA late spring • www.ravensoft.com

Voyager - *Elite Force* might have been the title that broke the unwritten rule which says all *Star Trek* games must be decidedly substandard, but it was accused of being too short. Those who were left wanting more should be happy to hear about Raven's plans for an expansion to include both new single and multiplayer content. Since *Star Trek: Voyager - Elite Force* was already a long enough title, Raven has wisely decided not to add too many more words and to simply call it an expansion.

There are two single-player campaigns: an assault on a Klingon compound and, bizarrely, a Captain Proton holo-deck novel which, for those who haven't seen the relevant episodes, is a black-and-white *Flash Gordon* retro adventure. Thankfully, there are no more Borks waddling

around, having suffered from slight over-exposure in the original game.

White *Elite Force* gave a realistic glimpse of some of the ship's decks, you couldn't help feeling cheated that this exploration was so restricted. The add-on addresses this with a full tour mode - going

“The expansion includes Virtual Voyager, a full tour mode encompassing 15 decks, with a host of mini-games to keep things interesting along the way”

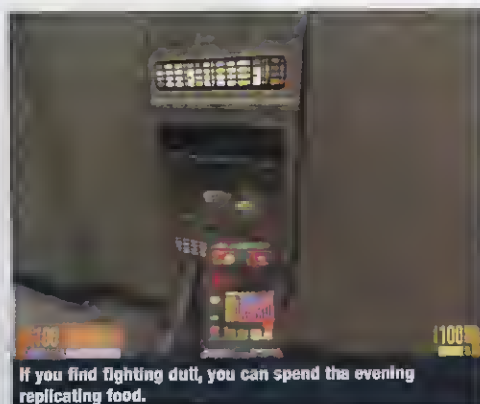
by the name of Virtual Voyager - encompassing 15 decks, including a host of mini-games to keep things interesting along the way.

The biggest additions are being made to the multiplayer game, which now includes 20 new

maps and 11 new player models. The really interesting additions are in the new modes though. First off there is Assimilation, which pitches the Federation against the Borg - the former have to kill the Borg Queen while the walking tins have to assimilate all the humans.

Action Hero is an interesting concept, where one person starts with all the weapons and has to fight against everyone else. Then there's *Voyager's* version of the Instagib, here called Disintegration, which effectively means that one shot kills.

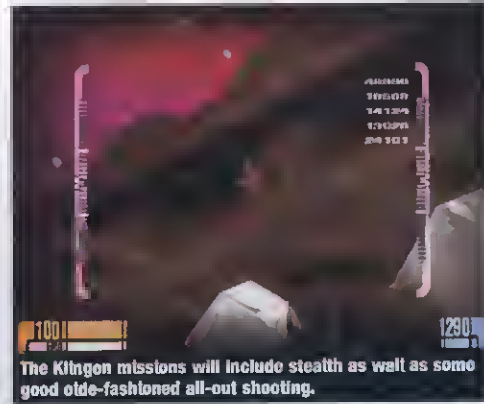
Finally, and perhaps more interestingly, there's the *Team Fortress* rip-off, Specialities, where you can be a medic, sniper, heavy weapons expert, technician or demolitionist. And if you can't afford to play it online, you can always use the bots.



If you find fighting dull, you can spend the evening replicating food.



That creature is either appearing out of thin air or disintegrating.



The Klingon missions will include stealth as well as some good olde-fashioned all-out shooting.

AGE OF STAR WARS

The people who made *Age Of Empires* tackle Lucas

★ Ensemble Studios • ETA 2002 • www.lucasarts.com

This is the stuff that dreams are made of. Ensemble Studios, the maker of the fantastic historical strategy *Age Of Empires* series, is working on *Star Wars Battlefront*. So after the disappointment of *Force Commander*, we can all rest easy knowing that the most important game licence in the world is in good hands.

Few details are available at the moment, but we do know that it's going to be a 2D RTS in the *AOE* style and, most importantly, that it uses all four films as background. *Battlefront* should start you off with the battle droids and stylised ships from *Episode I* and let you work your way to the more satisfying Stormtroopers, Tie-Fighters and Imperial Walkers.

After the cancellation of *Obi Wan* on PC on the grounds that it did not meet the company's "recently heightened quality standards", this seems like another positive move, started when they entrusted *Star Wars Galaxies* to *EverQuest* developer Verant and a *Star Wars* RPG to BioWare. We can only wait with bated breath for more news and screenshots, since the game will probably not be ready until well into next year.



Star Wars Battlefront should stomp *Force Commander* into the dust.

THE DREAM IS OVER

The Gollops' *Dreamland Chronicles* has been cancelled. Bugger

★ Mythos Games • ETA never • www.mythosgames.com

It was going to be one of the greatest turn-based strategy games ever. It was going to take the concept of the much-loved *UFO: Enemy Unknown* – the first in the *X-COM* series – and give it an extraordinary 3D update. It was going to be a sophisticated, multi-platform blockbuster. We were looking forward to it.

Then, on the Mythos forum, the legendary Julian Gollop posted this: "It is with great regret I have to announce that *Dreamland* has been cancelled. We have

been looking for a publisher for a while now, but no agreement has been reached and we have run out of cash. There will be no further development on the game."

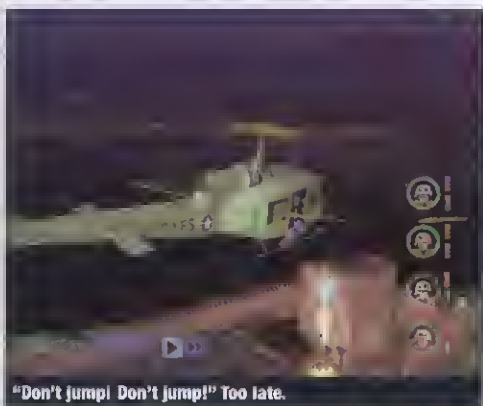
The rumours are that more than £10 million had already been spent on *Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge* and there is a whole Transatlantic drama involved in its cancellation. Virgin, the European publisher of the game, who was financing the project, found that it could no longer afford to do so and was forced to

loan a substantial sum from Bethesda. In exchange, Bethesda acquired rights to publish the game in the States and subsequently tried to become the sole proprietor of the title. There were even rumours of them replacing Mythos with a cheaper Russian team. Rather than let this happen, Virgin decided to pull the plug on *Dreamland*. Confused?

Virgin and Bethesda have refused to comment, leaving only Mythos' side of the story, but neither have denied any of it.

Games get cancelled all the time – *Obi Wan* being a recent example – but rarely is it a title that has created such anticipation throughout the gaming community.

If you think it's not a big deal, you either know nothing about the game or its developers or you dislike the marvellous *X-COM* series. At least we know that Mythos is going to jump straight into another big project, and hopefully we'll see *Dreamland* resurface in some other form in the near future.



"Don't jump! Don't jump!" Too late.



This was *X-COM* taken to a whole new level.



Will Infogrames do something about *X-COM: Alliance* now?



The story is set after *First Contact*.

BORG AGAIN

The assimilating little blighters are back

★ Cyberlore • ETA Christmas • www.cyberlore.com

They lit up dozens of otherwise dreary *Voyager* episodes, and now the Borg are getting a game all of their own. *Borg Assimilator* is a *SimCity* kind of game, where you control the biotechnological race on their quest to assimilate as many other species as possible.

Gameplay comprises the daily running of the colony, its construction and expansion, and some RTS combat missions thrown in for good measure. These will take place in the process of assimilating the likes of the Romulans, Klingons and, of course, humans, who won't give up without a fight. And yes, Species 8472 will make an appearance. The game's campaign is made up of 12 levels, but there will be enough researching, building and conquering in each to make you a very busy drone.

MAY THE G-FORCE BE WITH YOU

Battle Of The Planets, the original Anime series, is set to become a game

★ Headfirst • ETA end of 2002 • www.headfirst.co.uk

If you were a kid watching television in the late '70s and early '80s, you're likely to feel an overwhelming wave of nostalgia at the mention of *Battle Of The Planets*, and are likely to spend the rest of the day humming the theme tune to yourself. Now that a new *BOTP* craze is sweeping the world, thanks mainly to the original shows beings reissued on video and DVD, Headfirst – which is also completing *Call Of Cthulhu* – has seized the opportunity to announce the release of a number of *G-Force* titles, with the first appearing at the end of next year.

The game will combine first- and third-person perspectives in a fully 3D environment, while the gameplay will combine pure action with platform skills and the use of vehicles. You'll be able to control any member of the team and build up the skills of each, RPG-style. It sounds fantastic, especially considering the multiplayer capabilities. Now, if only some would snap up the rights to *Mazinger Z*...



Ahh, it's Mark, Jason, Tiny, Keyop and Princess in all their glory.

FOR THE QUEEN!

FOR NABOO!

FOR FREEDOM!



STOP THE INVASION!

STAR WARSTM

BATTLETM for NABOO

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PC
CD

RENNET
RECELENT



The Man who KNOWS

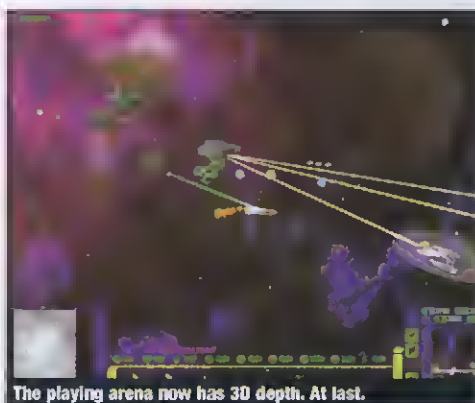
SEX & DRUGS & GAMES

The Virgin Interactive crew have been described as "dirty, filthy bastards" following a collaboration with soft porn newspaper, *The Daily Sport*. Virgin has agreed to distribute a sick new game, innocuously titled *The Daily Sport Football Strip*, in which female models remove their clothes in response to correctly answered football questions. It promises full nudity if all questions are answered correctly – that's tits, arse, fanny, the lot. A Virgin spokesman panted: "Like the paper, the quiz features beautiful girls, and like the paper the quiz is all about fun." He then tailed off into tedious marketing speak about "maximum cross-exposure", which may have been a play on words based on the fact that the game features women exposing their sexual organs. A more obvious joke was made by *Daily Sport* editor Tony Livesey, who smirked: "It's the game you wouldn't mind being pulled off at half-time for," cleverly using a footy reference to conjure up an image of a heavily perspiring man on his knees masturbating furiously.

Codemasters has shocked the world of interactive entertainment by announcing a staggering eight games, namely *Delta Force: Elite Driver*, *Joy Rider*, *FMW Pro Off Road Racing*, *Mad Max: Road Warrior*, *Tamiya R/C Racing*, *War Zone Driver*, *Demolition Derby* and *Apache Combat Pilot*. However, it turned out to be a wicked, deceptive lie. A spokesman said: "It was an experiment to see what gamers' response would be. None of the titles are in development, but if five billion people reply saying one of them is great, then of course we would look at it much closer." Never going to happen.

A bunch of media clowns are attempting to make gaming fashionable, dispelling the idea that gamers are badly-dressed dullards who sit around in their underpants fighting goblins. According to their heavily designed website: "Joystick Junkies is a fusion of the retro arcade scene and modern gaming culture." A range of game-related merchandise is available, including a T-shirt bearing the legend Crackman, a clever juxtaposition of an ancient arcade game with an addictive illegal drug. Joystick Junkies kicked off with a party in East London's painfully trendy Hoxton Square, throughout which the mainly male attendees circled round the girls from Channel 4's *Bits* like flies round a steaming pat of cow shit.

And finally, PC ZONE's own Steve Hill has been surprisingly nominated as Ligger Of The Year by trade newspaper CTW, despite being virtually bed-ridden – crippled by sloth and *Champ Man* addiction. Quoting Paul Mallinson, he again wheeled out the line: "I don't get out of bed for anything less than America or operating heavy machinery." The tit.



The playing arena now has 3D depth. At last.



Those cubes look more detailed than before.

ARMADA SEQUEL ENGAGED

The *Star Trek* machine keeps on rolling

★ Mad Doc • ETA end of year • www.maddocsoftware.com

Star Trek games always come in clusters, so it's no surprise that, hot on the heels of the *Voyager: Elite Force* expansion and the Borg colony simulator, Activision has announced a sequel to *Star Trek: Armada*.

Although it wasn't a particularly inspired real-time strategy, *Armada* appealed to people who don't normally play RTSs, thanks mainly to the simplicity of its gameplay. Hardcore gamers scoffed at the unoriginal features and the fact that, despite being set in space, the gaming area

was completely two-dimensional. While the follow-up isn't likely to go the full *Homeworld* route, these screenshots do seem to suggest a greater visual depth.

Whether this will affect the way the game plays is another matter, although developer Mad Doc is promising more strategic options and a new tactical view setting. The single-player campaign will feature three playable races: Federation, Klingon and Borg, and we can only hope that they are woven into a story that is as good as the original.



THE PLAYING FIELDS

A gamer's paradise, The Playing Fields is a computer games bar where you can relax and play games the way they are meant to be played – with someone else. Just a 30-second walk away from Warren Street tube station (Northern and Victoria lines), you can find it at 143 Whitfield Street, London.

Once there, you can jump on one of the 23 state-of-the-art machines on offer, and either play via a network or over the Net on games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Glants*, *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, *Sacrifice*, *Rune* and many others. Each machine boasts an AMD 1.1GHz processor, 128Mb SDRAM, a 17in monitor and a NVIDIA GeForce 2 GTS graphics card – no less.

You have to be aged at least 14 to play and ID may be required. The Playing Fields is open seven days a week from noon to 11pm (10pm on Sundays). For prices and more information, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

And for a free hour of play, simply fill in the slip (right) and take it along with you to the Playing Fields.

Turn to page 98 for details of the PC ZONE Readers' Challenge



DISCOUNT SLIP

Name:Date Of Birth:

Address:

E-mail Address:

Tel No:Date:

★ This discount slip entitles one person to play for one hour free of charge on one occasion between April 6 and May 3, 2001, at The Playing Fields, 143 Whitfield Street, London, UK.

You must be 14 years of age or older in order to participate in this offer. The slip must be filled in correctly and must be the original from a copy of PC ZONE, otherwise it will not be valid.

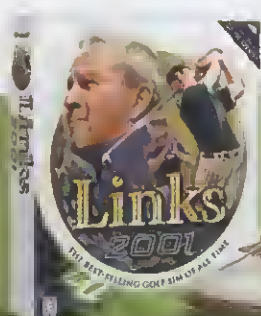
Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Only one slip per reader per issue.



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*Anticipated street price



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man, machine and modem in perfect harmony



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TECH HEAD

NVIDIA announces the GeForce3 as promised, plus a round-up of hardware news

WORDS Carlos Ruiz

GEFORCE3 EXPOSED

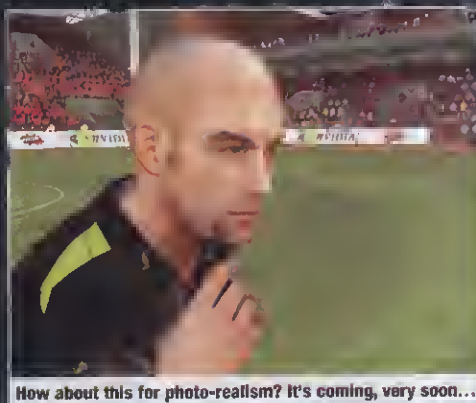
The best graphics chipset just got much better

NVIDIA (www.nvidia.com) chose to roll out its flagship GeForce3 (the NV20) at the Macworld Expo Tokyo 2001, exciting Apple-heads with news that cards based on the chipset will come as standard in future Power Mac G4s. This illustrates the all-round capabilities of GeForce3 technology, but it will no doubt be put to much better use when enhancing PC games in 2001.

The GeForce3, with its infiniteFX™ engine, is the first chipset to support DirectX 8.0 vertex and pixel shaders in hardware (previous software-based methods required too much CPU power), allowing for amazingly lifelike images and real-time effects. In addition, a programming facility will allow software designers to customise the graphics pipeline, meaning GeForce3 can potentially cater for a virtually infinite list of visual effects. As such, it is arguably the biggest step forward in graphics technology since the original GeForce 256, beating even the impressive feature-laden Voodoo 4/5 series.

To illustrate this, recent demos programmed by NVIDIA contain textures that appear to be truly photo-realistic, while the appearance of objects and animated living creatures are enhanced through the use of organic imperfections and facial expressions. Unlike most hardware T&L features which have yet to prove themselves as essential, gamers should expect to see many excellent examples of this exciting technology fairly soon.

Manufactured in a brand new 0.15-micron process, the GeForce3 features a new Lightspeed Memory Architecture designed to optimise its 7.36Gb/sec of memory bandwidth. It also has a



How about this for photo-realism? It's coming, very soon...

new, more efficient 'Quincunx' multisampling anti-aliasing method to smooth jagged lines, equal in quality to 3dfx's best 4x AA mode but running at the same speed as the 2x mode.

How beneficial will this futuristic technology be to the average consumer, who only has access to current games? Well, the Lightspeed Memory Architecture will aid the other improvements and refinements to provide significantly increased performance in the majority of 3D games. Meanwhile, the high-quality Quincunx AA mode will give titles a new, smoother look.

Games that support vertex and pixel shaders in hardware will arrive later this year, coinciding with the release of the Xbox (which will share the same basic GeForce3 core), so you'll need to wait a good few months before you can reap the true benefits.

NAPSTER NO MORE

The supremely popular MP3 downloading network is slowly being shut down

Slow court proceedings and lengthy appeals have meant Napster has survived for a lot longer than many expected, especially after the RIAA and several high profile bands stepped in to halt its progress. The peer-to-peer network of MP3 enthusiasts grew rapidly in size, culminating in millions of simultaneous users hosting just about every song you could imagine, free for anyone to download in the time it takes to make a cup of tea.

Record companies are now submitting lists of all their copyrighted songs to Napster, and forcing their removal from the service. Effectively, this

means that typing in 'Eminem' and 'Stan', for example, will now trigger a block and show zero results. More than a million songs have been blocked so far, with the list increasing all the time – and although Napster still exists and works as a service, its functionality has been severely decreased.

The injunction proposed by the Recording Industry would have shut Napster down entirely, so the owners still have time to arrange an agreement with them, or switch to a membership-based service. The latter option would involve a monthly fee, partly compensating for alleged record label losses.

This cat hasn't got many lives left...



FACT CANNON

★ Hercules has jumped straight on the GeForce3 bandwagon, entering the fray with the 3D Prophet III 64Mb. The board has a custom cooling solution to ensure no fry-ups occur, which is especially useful since it comes with a comprehensive tweaking utility. Other niceties include OOR RAM running at 460MHz, full PowerDVD 3.0 software, and a TV-out. See www.hercules.com for more details.

★ The next version of everyone's favourite operating system, Windows XP, will utilise Microsoft's (www.microsoft.co.uk) Windows Product Activation, or WPA. This means you obtain a unique serial number over the phone or while online, ensuring that even if you know the 'right people', blagging a free copy will prove to be that little bit more difficult. Incidentally, cracked versions of Office XP are already circulating around dark corners of the Web.



★ Microsoft is unsure whether to release Internet Explorer 6.0 as a standalone package or as part of Windows XP. A recent anti-trust verdict found that earlier versions of IE were unfairly bundled into Windows products to eliminate competition from Netscape, but this is currently being appealed against. Either way, IE 6.0 will be even more refined than 5.5, with several new options.



★ The new V.92 modem standard has been adopted quickly by US Robotics, who are not only shipping V.92 modems but also offering free upgrades to owners of select V.90 models. Providing your ISP supports it, advantages will include call waiting to suspend an Internet connection, faster dial-up times, increased upload speeds and more. Get all the necessary information at www.usr.com/v92.

★ According to reports, Microsoft's Xbox could make a US\$2 billion loss over a five-year period before turning in a profit through game sales. Inexperience in the market, fierce competition from Sony and Nintendo, and high manufacturing could spell trouble for the software giant. However, things are looking up in terms of developer support, with Lionhead and several other key studios getting in on the act. The official site is at www.xbox.com.



CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not

THE megastores TOP 10

MAR	APR	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	SEVERANCE	REBEL ACT	COOEMASTERS	87%
RE	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIOOS	93%
3	3	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	HAVAS	95%
4	4	QUAKE III: TEAM ARENA	id	ACTIVISION	61%
7	5	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIOOS	62%
1	6	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
2	7	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
6	8	THEME PARK ING	MAXIS	EA	50%
8	9	DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR	NOVALOGIC	NOVALOGIC	69%
9	10	MECHWARRIOR 4 - VENCEANCE	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	84%

THE TOP 10

MAR	APR	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
2	1	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIOOS	62%
3	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIOOS	93%
NE	3	SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS	REBEL ACT	COOEMASTERS	87%
4	4	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
8	5	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	HAVAS	95%
6	6	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
7	7	RED ALERT 2	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
1	8	DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR	NOVALOGIC	NOVALOGIC	69%
RE	9	PROJECT IGI	INNERLOOP	EIOOS	85%
NE	10	THEME PARK ING	BULLFROG	EA	50%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 2000)

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:

QUESTION: What nationality are developers of *Severance: Blade Of Darkness*, Rebel Act?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below.

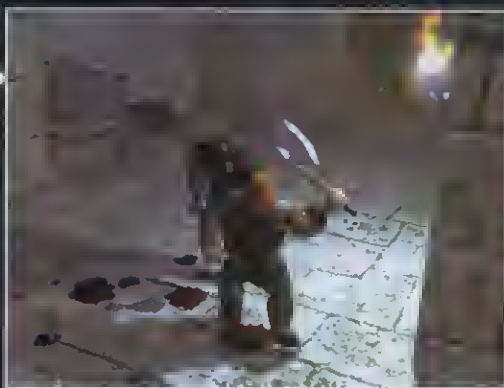
✉ Name/address/postcode/daytime phone number/email address/job title/company name/age if under 18.

✉ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.

✉ Are you a current subscriber to PC ZONE?

Answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo (CPCZ0501A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: May 3, 2001.

✉ Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.



Severance: has the game's certificate influenced its sales?

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

God, these charts don't change much, do they? Admittedly there haven't been many big releases so far this year, and most people are saving their pennies for *Black & White* (I know I would be), but do we really need to see the same names time and time again? The only entry of any significance is *Severance: Blade Of Darkness*, the ultra-violent hack 'n' slash from Rebel Act. Opinion is divided in the office as to its merits, but you can't deny that the 18 certificate will have helped with the sales. This is how things should be? Adult games, for adult people, clearly marked. We're taking bets at the moment to see how long B&W will stay in the charts. We all know it's going to go straight to number one, but can it beat *The Sims* and *Gris Tarrant* for longevity? We certainly hope so.

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"Severance? I've never been so bored in my life! There's only so much repetitive arcade action I can handle in my exciting life. People only bought it because of the BBFC 18 rating plastered across the front of the box."

Paul Wade

"And so the ever-pointless likes of *WWTBAM* and *The Sims* continue their weekly onslaught of the PC Games charts, is it any wonder that PC gaming is becoming less popular when all the paying public buy is this rubbish? But wait, what's this I see creeping in at Number five? *Half-Life: Generations* has not only returned to the Charts but has also risen to fifth position, maybe the average consumer isn't so dumb after all..."

Dan

"Once again, commercial success is no guarantee of artistic integrity. It's a good job I've got a nice big bottle of valium or I might be tempted to comment on what a bunch of narrow-minded, spoon-fed, lobotomised, anally retentive, septic boils on the arse of life the game-buying public appears to be turning into."

Peachfuzz, Watlasey

"Blah, blah, blah, blah. Why are *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* and *The Sims* still there? Why isn't *Project IGI* higher? Good to see *Half-Life* back in the charts, etc, etc..."

Bagadonuts

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

- 1 *The Sims* (EA)
- 2 *CM 99/00* (Eidos)
- 3 *AOE II* (Microsoft)
- 4 *Halt-Life* (Sierra)
- 5 *Delta Force 2* (Novalogic)

2 YEARS AGO...

- 1 *RollerCoaster Tycoon* (MicroProse)
- 2 *Superbike World Championship* (EA)
- 3 *SimCity 3000* (Maxis)
- 4 *Alpha Centauri* (Firaxis)
- 5 *Premier Manager 99* (Gremlin)

5 YEARS AGO...

- 1 *Screamer* (Virgin)
- 2 *Command & Conquer* (Virgin)
- 3 *Worms* (Team17)
- 4 *Rebel Assault 2* (LucasArts)
- 5 *Hexen* (GT Interactive)

NAZI CIRCUS

The KISS team is back with *WWII: Normandy*

★ Third Law Interactive • ETA TBA • www.thirdlaw.com

KISS: *Psycho Circus* wasn't the biggest success story of last year, but for a fun, no-brainer, first-person shooter it did its job well. Developer Third Law hasn't wasted any time following it up with another shooter, this time set during WWII.

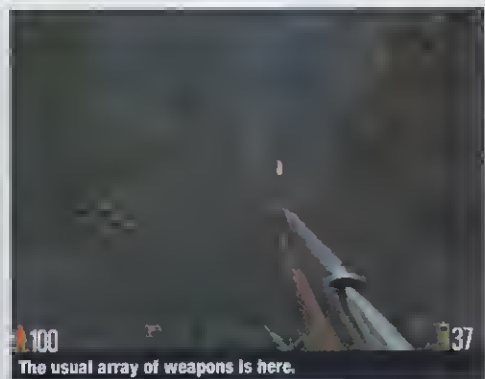
By Third Law's own admission, *WWII: Normandy* is something they just knocked off while they were waiting for their next big project to come along, so don't expect it to be anywhere near as polished as *Psycho Circus*. As a result, the game is geared towards a straight-to-budget release, assuming a publisher in this country will go ahead and publish it.

From the screenshots it looks like WWII is closer to *Mortyr* than *Medal Of Honor*, and in many ways the game is more of a mod using the LithTech engine than a proper game in its own right. Not surprisingly, Third Law has plenty of ex-mod creators among its ranks.

Those looking for a short and undemanding Nazi-shooting title should keep their ears to the ground. Well, one ear at least.



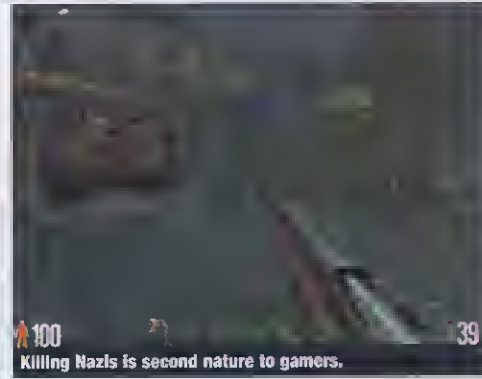
The can-canning Germans make a welcome return.



The usual array of weapons is here.



There are no plans to include multiplayer modes.



Killing Nazis is second nature to gamers.

POSH SPICE

Dune goes all French

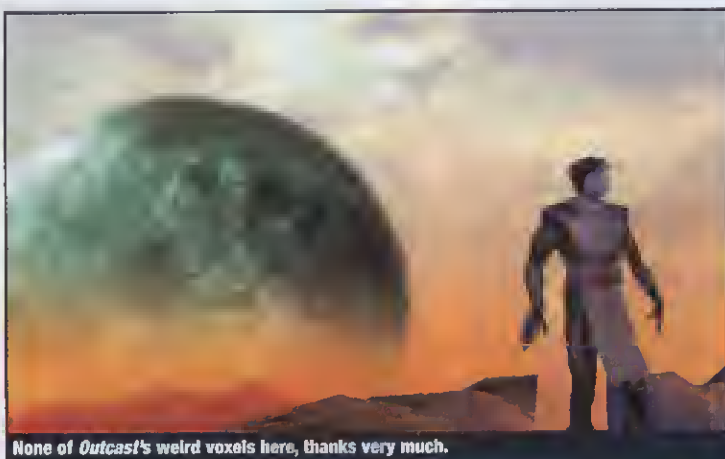
★ WideScreen Games • ETA winter • www.wsg.fr

All eyes may be on the impressive *Emperor: Battle For Dune* from Westwood, but there's more to Frank Herbert's classic sci-fi novel than real-time strategy. French developer WideScreen Games is working on an action/adventure going by the straightforward title of *Frank Herbert's Dune*.

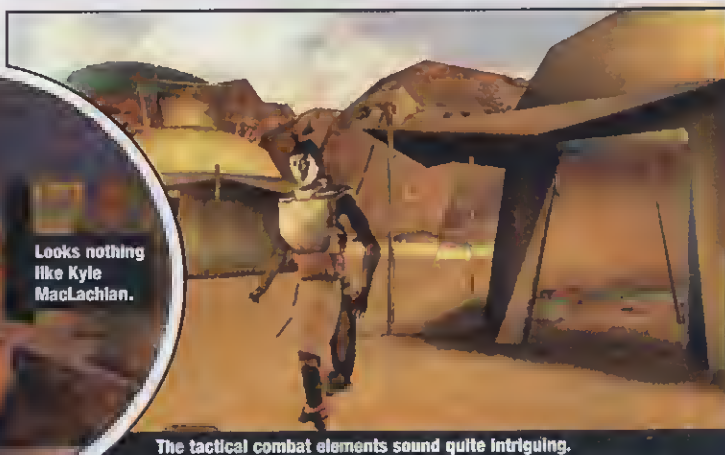
As you can imagine, the plot follows the book very closely and casts you as Paul Atreides. Following the power struggle over Melange – the famous spice that's been the basis of all the *Dune* strategy games – Paul, a duke in the former regime, ends up among some dirty desert dwellers, the Fremen. Part of the game is set while you try to prove his worth to the Fremen people, fighting spice smugglers, sabotaging factories and generally exploring the planet of Dune and perfecting your combat techniques.

It certainly looks good and its developers include the talented chaps behind *Dutcast* and *Alone in the Dark III* among their ranks. Herbert's tale seems to be enjoying a renaissance, with a US mini-series on the way as well as *Emperor*.

Dune should be available at the end of the year, publisher permitting.



None of *Outcast's* weird voxels here, thanks very much.



The tactical combat elements sound quite intriguing.



Looks nothing like Kyle MacLachlan.

SHORTS

SMART THIEF

It may be worlds away from Looking Glass's *Thief* series, but *The Sting!* is another steal 'em up. Complete with unnecessary exclamation mark, this has sadly nothing to do with the '70s classic film about conmen, starring Robert Redford and Paul Newman. Instead, your job is to work your way up from petty theft to famous crimes, starting with pickpocketing and hopefully ending with giant diamonds or something. The German version is out as we speak and an English version should follow soon.

LIVE FOREVER

Going back to its RTS roots, Take 2's *Outlive* is yet another title focusing on mining and resource management. Following the age-old plot of two factions competing to control the minerals on a new planet, *Outlive* pitches a group of genetically modified humans capable of surviving in the planet's atmosphere against a group of robots designed purely for mining. There are 40 single-player maps, over 20 units to build and research trees to investigate. Amazing, eh?

WAITING TO HAPPEN

Forget your *Wacky Races*. When it comes to comedy driving game possibilities, Paul Presley's heading eastbound and down, his 18 wheels a-rolle!

THE CAR CHASE FILMS OF BURT REYNOLDS

Hollywood has had many golden moments since Louis Lumière first turned to his brother Auguste and said "zere is zis 'orse, see? And eet is moving on zis screen, see? And eef we keep ze rights to it, America will one day try to remake it in a slightly inferior way and we will become rich on the proceeds and have all the neck-onions and bicycles we can carry."

The early silent films showcased comedic talent that satisfied the pre-war audience appetite for Hitler impersonating tramps and blundering police forces driving in a single car with bad suspension. The '40s and '50s became known for studio epics – *Ben Hur*, *Gone With The Wind* and, er, *Bedtime For Bonzo* – paving the way for today's big-budget, special effects-driven action thrillers. Yes there's certainly a rich tapestry for any cinephile to dip into. Nonetheless, there's one era of cinematic brilliance that often seems to be cruelly neglected by your Halliwells, your Normans and to a lesser extent your Porters and Frostrups. An era during which Hollywood's greatest star shone so brightly he had to wear mirrored shades. An era that forged a new genre in film-making.

And an era that is ripe for conversion to the world of video computer gaming. I talk, of course, of the late '70s/early '80s car chase films of Burt Reynolds.

Now everyone will instantly assume I'm talking about *Smokey And The Bandit* here. And yes,

while the harrowing emotional drama that is the tale of Sheriff Buford T Justice's hot pursuit of Bandit, Frog and the venerable Snowman would indeed make for some exciting multi-vehicular mayhem in a virtual world, no one computer game could ever really capture the comedic genius that was Jackie Gleason. That said, aside from – ahem – *Mercedes Truck Racing*, we haven't seen a good juggernaut sim on the PC and the closing Truckers versus Police demolition scenes in *Smokey II* would

"Burt would bring a much-needed dose of redneck drag racing to the genre. I'm not sure how you'd fit his womanising into the game, but where there's a will..."

suit the *Carmageddon* engine down to a tee. If you threw in a bonus game revolving around insulting Junior's mother, things would be near perfect. You little tick turd.

But to concentrate solely on *Bandit* would be to criminally ignore Burt's other vehicular masterpieces. *Hooper* would be the perfect setting for an updated version of Geoff Crammond's *Stunt Car Racer* and *Stroker Ace* would bring a much-needed dose of redneck drag racing to an otherwise empty genre. I'm not entirely sure how you'd fit Burt's womanising into the games, but where there's a will...

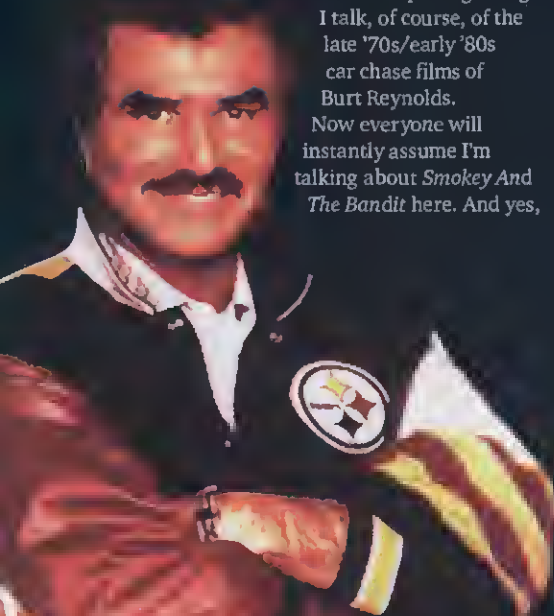
And then there's the classic, nay legend, that is *The Cannonball Run*. What can you possibly say about a film that was once described by none other than Melvyn Bragg (lie) as "possibly the single most important film ever made about cross-country illegal car races starring Burt Reynolds"? Not since *Ocean's Eleven* has a single film so managed to combine such high levels of star power on screen. The glamour of Burt. The comic genius of Dom DeLuise. The sophistication of Roger Moore. The blood/alcohol level of Dean Martin. The glass eye of Sammy Davis Jr. The hair of Farrah Fawcett. The nose of Jamie Farr. The cleavage of Adrienne Barbeau. The film had something for everyone.

The game would be superb, too. There was already a prototype version of it in the early *Test Drive* series so the precedent is there. Cross-country racing in a series of high-performance motor vehicles. Traffic cops waiting behind every billboard. Fellow Cannonballers causing mayhem as they go. The multiplayer options would be amazing and you could even include a bonus fighting game starring Jackie Chan every time you stop for gas near Peter Fonda's gang of comedy



Hell's Angels. Something like *Tekken Tag Tournament*, with players swapping between the chop-sockey fists and feet of the Chan man and the high-flying lunacy of Dom DeLuise's Captain USA alter ego.

It's no secret that the driving genre is starting to stagnate. *Midtown Madness 2* has effectively killed any remaining interest in the urban-based racing game and other than the interminable deluge of rallying and F1 titles there's nothing out there for the off-beat driving fan. *The Italian Job* might offer something (assuming it ever appears), but for sheer quality you have to go to the top. After all, in the words of Mad Dog – *Cannonball's* unsung hero – if you're gonna be a bear, be a grizzly. Just hope there's never a game based on *Cannonball Run 2*. Because it was shite. Even with Frank Sinatra.





CHALLENGE YOUR MIND NOT YOUR POCKET

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HOTSHOTS

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

The dark is creeping up

★ Infogrames • Out late spring

The fourth instalment of this massively influential horror action/adventure is almost upon us, and we should be bringing you an exclusive review in a couple of issues. Just in case you need reminding what it's all about, you play the role of either Edward Carnby – the hero of all the chapters in the series – or newcomer Aline Cedrac, a beautiful archaeologist. Most of the game takes place on Shadow Island, complete with haunted mansions, unspeakable monsters and effective camera angles. As usual, there are plenty of puzzles to solve among the gloomy carnage, all wrapped up in an exquisite-looking engine. But you can see that for yourself.



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HOTSHOTS

The Cold War never looked so hot

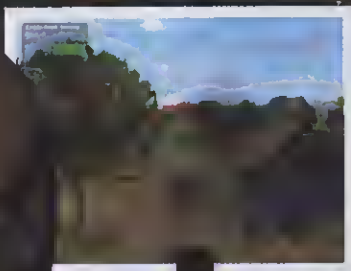
OPERATION FLASHPOINT

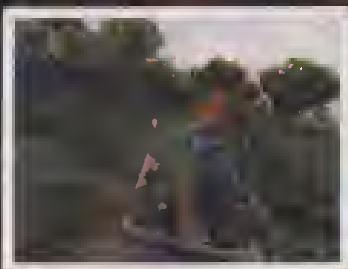
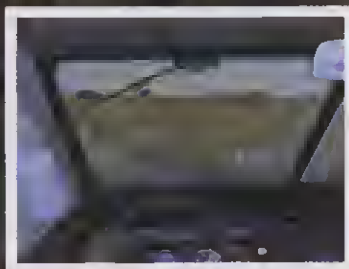
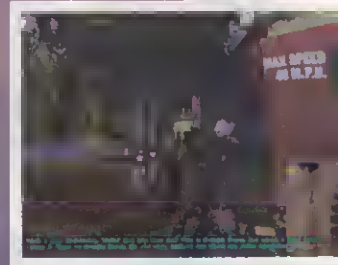
★ Codemasters • Out June

Tactical shooters are beginning to come of age, with *Hidden & Dangerous 2* well underway and, more importantly, with *Operation Flashpoint* nearing completion. At times incredibly complex but generally quite simple to play, *Flashpoint* allows you to control a group of soldiers during the Cold War, drive

them in a truck, shoot them down in a chopper, mow them over in a tank or stare at the back of their heads as you sit in the back seat of a Skoda. The amount of detail is quite breathtaking and contributes to creating a total wargame experience. There are more than 30 vehicles, and 20 infantry weapons, and you can also

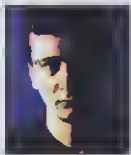
command up to 12 soldiers over the 50 missions that make up the game. The real clincher though has to be the mission editor – you won't believe how simple it is to construct your own scenario, from tractor races to massive tank versus helicopter battles. You can be certain that this will be something special.





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MAILBOX



Got something to say to us? Nice, nasty or otherwise, get it off your chest and if it's interesting enough we'll print it

★ ANSWERED BY Dave Woods

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

WRITE TO Mailbox, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 5FF.

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at www.pczone.co.uk for further info.

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON



PC ZONE is giving away not one, but two of these wonderful GameVoice devices from Microsoft to the writer of the Star Letter this month. Using these, you can communicate with other players - including the lucky friend you give your second GameVoice to - online and give yourself a massive advantage over the Luddites who have to stop and type instructions. They're valued at £49.99 each, and are worth every penny. We know 'cause we use them.

RATS WITH WINGS

I read your article on videogames turning people into killers. As per normal, all the so-called 'experts' fail to see one vital point: killing in videogames is a very different thing to killing in real life.

Let me give you an example. At the tender age of eight, I had already been playing *Doom* for a while and could shoot my way through imps and zombies with ease. However, when asked to shoot a pigeon, I couldn't do it. Despite a good bit of blasting pixelated foes, I was unable to pull the trigger. Only after another two to three years of peer pressure could I sum up the courage to kill one.

The only people who will readily kill people after playing videogames are psychos in the first place. Videogames are just being used as a scapegoat.

Will Watson, via e-mail

★ I was starting to get a warm glow inside until you started going on about the pigeons. "Two to three years of peer pressure" to kill one. Who do you hang around with? Ken Livingstone?

GAME OVER

Although I realise this letter is unlikely to find its way onto the sparkling pages of your magazine (because I am about to mock

"I hope that for the good of PC gaming we soon have an ending in a game that will make grown men cry with its greatness"

MISAGH MAHMOUDI IS DISAPPOINTED BY MOST GAME ENDINGS

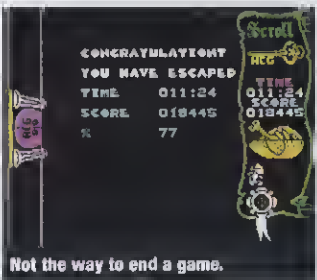
everybody's favourite game), I am writing it anyway.

I would like to open a debate about the 'endings' that us PC gamers have to endure in our games. Frankly, I am utterly disappointed at one game in particular - *Half-Life*. I played that game for

nearly two months non-stop - I was loving it - and I couldn't wait to get to the end. However, when I did, I couldn't have been more disappointed. It was the most ridiculous ending I have ever seen. It had no real reference to the events that had happened all the way throughout the game - nothing, it's just plain cack.

However, it's not the only PC game guilty of this sin.

Icewind Dale, *Grim Fandango*, *Sin*, *Homeworld* and *Rainbow Six*, to name but a few, also have poor endings. Why do developers do this? Do they just get to the end of a game and think: "Well, the game's finished, now we have to do an ending. Hmm, we can't



be bothered, let's get the cleaner to do it."

I'm not saying that all PC games are like this - *Deus Ex* and *Diablo II* are good examples, but they're definitely in a minority. I think it's time for PC developers to get to know what we want. In the end, my sole opinion won't change a thing, but I hope that for the good of PC gaming we have an ending in a game that will make grown men cry with its greatness.

Misagh Mahmoudi, via e-mail

★ A good point well made. There's nothing worse than playing a game for months just to be short chan... (snip)

MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR

Are PC gamers really a totally different breed?

First off, I want to say I think your magazine is the best dedicated PC games mag on the market.

I'm a gamer and have been since I was seven (I'm now 18), and have enjoyed many classic video and PC gaming moments. However, when in chat rooms or even talking with my fellow gamers (friends or strangers), I have noticed a wide void and sometimes a level of hatred between PC and console owners.

I own a fairly decent PC (in need of a video card upgrade) and several consoles (no PlayStations) and I play both rigorously. I have come to the conclusion that they are very different platforms, not due to the system architecture but because of the style of game and the style of gamer. The PC's strongest feature is its online capabilities and the return of the bedroom coder

(I'm one of them). PC owners also tend to be more serious about their games.

Console gaming, on the other hand, is about out-and-out multiplayer fun (four friends crammed on a couch yelling



★ Samus Aran - a woman you don't want to mess with.

insults at each other), and beats the PC in most single-player games (*Deus Ex* being the only PC game that has yet to be surpassed - if you don't believe me, play *Perfect Dark*). So what's the point of this letter? PC and console games and gamers are completely different and both are great.

On a different tip, and with regard to the Supertest in issue 100, the first really popular female game character wasn't Lara but Samus Arran, who starred in the *Metroid* series of games. Most people didn't know she was a woman until *Super Metroid* was released on the SNES (considered one of the best games ever made), probably due to the lack of people able to finish the first game.

AMF Cyclone, via e-mail

★ And just to prove that the PC is still the king of online gaming, have a couple of GameVoice contraptions.





PETER, SON OF PETER

I would like to point out a mistake in your magazine. For the past year you have printed an insert in your Mailbox page that states: "For the next few issues of *PC ZONE*, we will be giving away a Microsoft Mouse..." In my book, a few doesn't equal 12, it equals two or three. Could you please amend your magazine accordingly?

Peter Peterson, via e-mail

★ Your wish is our command. Unfortunately, by forcing us to alter the text you've just done yourself out of a mouse.

STRIKE FORCE #1

Over recent months I have acquired hundreds of mods for various FPSs, and have become a worshipper of the truths of your Modwatch section. I have, however, become exceedingly pissed off at the total lack of servers for even the very best of mods.

So you can imagine my extreme amazement and annoyance when I discovered to my dismay that your site is no exception. Why can't you at least put up a few servers for five-star mods such as *Strike Force* from your Modwatch section?

STRIKE FORCE #2

Why is *Strike Force* not included in your list of games for the Readers' Challenge, when it is "shoulder to shoulder with *Counter-*

Strike"? I own both *Counter-Strike* and *Strike Force*, and in my opinion *Strike Force* is marginally the better of the two. I realise that *Strike Force* is not as famous or as generally popular as *Counter-Strike*, possibly because it is a huge download, but if you manage to fit *Strike Force* v1.55 on April's CD, I see no reason why you shouldn't set up servers for *SF* on your website and include it in the Readers' Challenge.

This would set a good example to all those traditionalist bastards who are so terrible at these newfangled mods that they don't dare display their total lack of skill, and inability to embrace the unsung labour of thousands of modmakers.

Anon, via e-mail

★ There's absolutely no reason why *Strike Force* isn't run on our servers. In fact, by the time you're reading this, one of our servers will be running the fabulous mod. Check the Readers' Challenge on page 98 for this month's password. It's not on the list of games for the Readers' Challenge because we haven't got a team that's played it enough. It's sad, but we're still hopelessly addicted to *Counter-Strike*. Maybe in the future...

BLACK & GREAT

It's great to see a company like Lionhead actually listening to and acting on feedback from the public

of why his games end up being so good. At the least it shows a refreshing lack of arrogance and it makes sense that six billion heads are better than one, no matter how talented that one is.

TANKS, BUT NO TANKS

Dear Mark Korda,

I read February's issue of *PC ZONE* and found a couple of points that unfortunately undermine the magazine's clear, accurate style of reporting. I am speaking of the blatant errors in your competition article to win a Military Tank Driving Day.

There are seven pictures of 'military' tanks from World War II (I liked the tropical fish tank picture). Picture two is entitled The StuG III, when it is clearly a picture of a Jagdpanther. Picture three is entitled The Firefly, when it is just a Sherman Mk4. And to top it off, picture number seven is entitled Panzer Mk V, when it is beyond doubt a Panzer Mk VI – the Panther was the Mk V, and the later designed Tiger 1 was the Mk VI.

I hope that my points are taken on board, and that your magazine is improved by the amendments to your future competition articles.

Julian Baldwin, via e-mail

★ Hmm. You might have had a point, but by addressing your letter to Mark Korda you've unfortunately undermined your own argument for accuracy. Never mind.

Oh, and if Julian has his facts wrong (we don't know and we're not going to check), don't bother writing in.

MR ANGRY

First, I would like to say great magazine, and your new-week website is fantastic. Now down to the nitty-gritty.

I am sick to death of people saying "xxxx game isn't realistic enough". Has anyone who's ever uttered those words actually driven a rally car, flown a B-17 into WWII Germany, or infiltrated an enemy base, taken out 20 to 30 terrorists and defused a bomb? NO! OK then, shut up and don't even talk to me about *The Sims*.

Secondly, can people stop complaining about the lack of an in-game save option for *IGI*. You don't need it! If you do need one it's probably because you're not very good at the game, and want to rush through it without the care it needs. Games like *Half-Life* are different – you need to save every five seconds because you only have 100 health for the whole game.

Oh, and if on level 8 of *IGI* you're sick to death of running into the building and opening the gates, there's an easier way. Kill the sniper as soon as you get out of the truck, then leg it towards the large crates, jump onto them and then run and jump over the wall. Job's a good 'un.

Andy Bilton, Lincoln

★ Andy, if there's anything else you want to get off your chest, you know the address. [E]



You just know it's gonna be big...

UPDATE

TRIBES

Once again *Phil Wand* straps on his jump pack and flies off to multiplayer paradise

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Dynamix
PUBLISHER Sierra
WEBSITE www.tribes2.com
OUT Real soon now

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Better graphics and beautifully landscaped outdoor environments
- ★ Highly detailed character skins, taunts and animations and a new race
- ★ Single-player training missions and bots mean you can play offline
- ★ Scrumptious interface, a wider range of weaponry, and 64-player servers

“Both *Team Fortress* and *Unreal Tournament Classic* lack the strange, sprawling otherworldliness of *Tribes 2*”

Before we start, a quick rundown for those of you who have been living under a rock for the past two years. Back in November of 1998, *StarSeige: Tribes* hit the online gaming scene. Big on teamplay, short on lag, it offered first-person shooter fans the chance to leap aboard vehicles, sail high above vast outdoor landscapes, and co-ordinate flag captures with their cohorts. Maps were universally huge, and consisted mainly of vast swathes of single-colour textures with massive slab-like stone bases brooding in the distance. Three classes – light, medium, heavy – enabled gamers to choose between reconnaissance duty, base defence and no-man’s land deathmatching.

Although massive in the States, the original *Tribes* never had the same impact on the UK gaming scene and failed to gain popularity. The weapons were unsatisfying, the

maps were little more than barren wastelands with humps, and the gameplay was often sluggish and disappointing. There were also a number of unresolved issues with 3D video cards, meaning many people couldn’t actually get in and play it at all.

Most importantly, it was nearly impossible to wrench *Quake* and *Half-Life* players away from their screens: to do so you had to offer spine-tingling excitement, better graphics, fatter sounds and weaponry that lit up the screen and dilated your pupils every time you pulled the trigger. So it wasn’t that *Tribes* was a bad game, it just didn’t feel like a complete game.

In the three years that Dynamix has been developing the follow-up, *Tribes 2*, they’ve had all these things to think about, as well as having a long hard look at arch-rivals *Counter-Strike*, *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament*. Looking at the screenshots, you’d be right in thinking they’ve pulled out all the

stops in order to achieve this. The graphics are light years away from those of its predecessor, as are the lighting effects and general open-air ambience. The outdoor maps now have outcrops of vegetation and woodland to distinguish one area from another, and patchy fog gives it a more menacing feel.

LOOKS SO FINE

There are more than 40 new maps in *Tribes 2*, each boasting the same seamless transition between indoor and outdoor environments that has become a trademark of the series. All can be affected by real-time atmospheric conditions – rain, snow, fog and storms – and feel as though they have no boundaries. While going exploring isn’t exactly the most constructive use of one’s gaming time, it is quite amazing to discover just how far you can stray into the wilderness. Sure, both *Unreal Tournament* and *Team Fortress Classic* have maps, bases and alfresco fragging zones, but



“Hey, you chose the wrong gear. You get out and push.”

CV

Dynamix

DYNAMIX

How a division of Sierra, Dynamix has been knocking out top-quality games since the late '80s. Best known for its multi-award-winning *The Incredible Machine* and the world's best-selling fishing game, *Trophy Bass 4*, the success of the *Tribes* series means things are really looking up for the Oregon-based developer.

1988 Abrams Battle Tank

1989 MechWarrior

1991 Red Baron

1993 The Incredible Machine

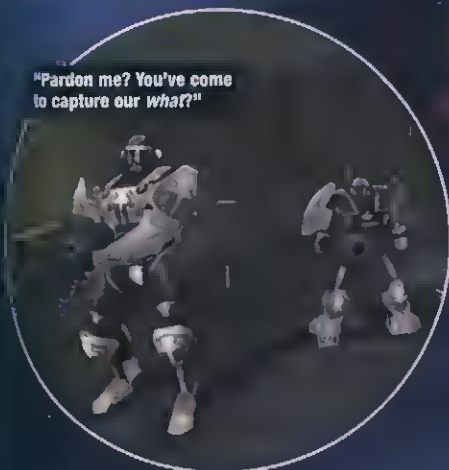
1994 Aces Of The Deep

1998 Tribes

1999 Trophy Bass 4

2

"Pardon me? You've come to capture our what?"



they lack that strange, sprawling otherworldliness of *Tribes 2*.

The textures are a big improvement, replacing the blocky polygon throw-rugs of its predecessor with a seamless 32-bit colour carpet. What's also noticeable is that, when you glance down at your feet, you can actually see your legs trudging up and down, a blurry shadow snapping at your heels. Look at the ground in something like *Counter-Strike* and you'll notice that you're all torso and no trousers. A minor point, but it all helps to pump up the realism.

As ever, terrain plays an important part in *Tribes* gameplay, with many geographical obstacles requiring a great deal of dexterity to negotiate with speed. Existing players will tell you that there's a lot of skill involved in making decent progress across any *Tribes* map, but the deep valleys and gorges in the new game are seriously tricky, as well as being rather breathtaking to look at. There are also three totally new multi-man ground vehicles to help you get from A to B, and the existing three aerial craft have been totally redesigned to be in keeping with the rest of the game.

Additionally, bases are now more fitting a game with its roots in sci-fi fantasy. They no longer

appear as giant granite mausoleums and instead have become far more intricate in their construction. While the interiors aren't quite up to the techno-Gothic architecture of *Quake III* and its siblings, everything about them – especially the replacement of sharp corners with curved surfaces – smacks of designer modernisation.

BANG

Dynamix has listened to criticisms about the *Tribes* armaments cabinet and has not only updated the existing gun rack for *Tribes 2*, but has also added two new shooters and four grenades. The old weapons are certainly more gratifying than before, with the humble blaster now emitting macho noises from the moment you hit the fire button to when

the energy projectiles splash home.

And so to the new toys. The shock lance is used in close-combat situations, and is operated much like a cattle-prod. Charge it up, poke your enemy, wait for the squeal. The missile launcher is supremely rewarding, enabling medium- and heavy-class warriors to launch guided rockets at their foe – the airborne torpedoes streaking high over the land like rogue fireworks, exploding on impact with the force of an Oklahoma bomb.



← Grenades are a welcome addition. The basic device is a humble pineapple, meaning you pull the pin, throw it, then coil into a foetal position and cover your ears. The concussion grenade is identical to that in *Team Fortress Classic*, emitting a powerful *kervoomph* that knocks enemy soldiers off balance.

Whiteout grenades are essentially *Counter-Strike* flashbangs, temporarily blinding anyone within range, and flare grenades are small beacons of light which can decoy locked-on enemy missiles. Whether anyone will actually use them for their intended purpose is another matter, as they're rather fetching when lobbed randomly about your base.

The standard *Tribes 2* display is not intrusive, yet dispenses a lot of information, including a resizable chat window, radar, health gauge



The new *Tribes 2* gang. As you can see, weapons and skins are top notch.

and weapons status. For the more strategic minded among you, a special commander role enables players to control other units and set waypoints. Here, the first-person view switches to a top-down, *Red Alert*-style map, complete with icons in the right margin and highlighted troop positions. This adds an entirely new dimension to the game, and is something likely to be seen

again in upcoming FPS titles including *Team Fortress 2*.

BOT INSPECTORS

The original *Tribes* had a near-perpendicular learning curve. There was no way that freshmen could learn how to play without connecting to the Internet, hooking up to a server, and getting their backsides kicked around maps they didn't know. In short, people who'd just spent money on the game were treated badly, and in many cases never came back for more.

Tribes 2 rectifies this by including a number of solo training exercises, allowing new recruits to get to grips with numerous teamplay FPS concepts, from basic offence and defence, right through to co-ordinating with team mates and achieving team goals.

But that doesn't mean you have to fire up your dial-up. Perhaps the

single most important addition to the *Tribes 2* code is bots, apeing the capabilities of *Unreal Tournament*. You can now host your own local network game and include up to 16 computer-controlled players, each able to pick classes and take on specific duties. Bots continually keep each other updated on what they're about to do, such as fortify base defences or head out for the enemy flag.

Oh, and they fight like bastards. Dynamix has done a good job of hiding the fact that the bots are controlled by a lightning-fast computer chip, and so instead of going down the *UT* route of making them either (a) impossibly daft or (b) impossible to kill, they've managed to find a happy medium between the two. They actually go and do things, like ensure your base isn't infiltrated by enemy flag runners, or seek and destroy

TEAMPLAY TEMPTATION

While *Tribes 2* arrives at a time when many people are getting tired of their existing online shooters, it faces stiff opposition from a number of corners. Here we have a look at three top titles that might possibly steal its thunder

1 COUNTER-STRIKE (PC)

www.counter-strike.net

We reckon *Counter-Strike* is more popular than sex. Last time we checked, the number of people playing the indomitable *Half-Life* mod actually exceeded the population of the entire planet. Much of the game's popularity is not because of heady realism and authentic firing mechanisms, but because it is far less demanding than *Quake*-style fragfests. And you can have a cup of tea and read the paper when you get shot. Will *Tribes 2* be as accessible?

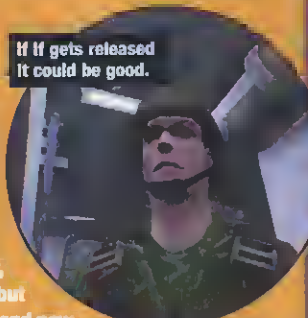


"Behind you." CS is a classic.

2 TEAM FORTRESS 2 (PC)

www.sierrastudios.com/games/teamfortress

Everyone got all steamed up, then Valve went quiet. And today there's still nothing. Where is *TF2*? Has *TF2* gone toes-up? What's so good about it? Nobody seems to know, not even Valve, who to this day has refused to set a release date. Recent *Team Fortress Classic* updates hint at the way *TF2* might look and play, and there are fresh rumours of a June playtest, but why bother waiting? *Tribes 2* is very much here and now.



If it gets released it could be good.

3 HALO (Xbox + PC?)

halo.bungie.com

Bungie's stunning sci-fi shooter for the Xbox console, and possibly PC if we're lucky, seems to have all the best elements from all the best shooters packed into one game. There are manned vehicles, indoor and outdoor maps, plus team-specific multiplayer goals, all brought to life through intricate textures and graphics, a 750MHz processor and unique NVIDIA-sourced video hardware. *Tribes 2* has an advantage in that it'll play on the kit you own today.



The Xbox lead is still looking lush.

A heavy-class warrior launches a missile at a passing bomber.



The airborne equivalent of a burnout: the vapour trail.

✎ You can now host your own local network game and include up to 16 computer-controlled bots



opposition units. They very rarely get in the way, so anyone used to the way *Unreal* bots come and put their arses in your face when you're sniping will breathe a sigh of relief.

Most importantly for frag freaks, the bots are worthy opponents in battle, and a world away from the tireless killing machines of *UT* on a high skill setting. They jump and they weave, but you never get the feeling that you're being cheated.

FRAGGING ONLINE

Most people will, of course, head online for their *Tribes 2* fix. The first game was renowned for its near-flawless gameplay, and while this latest instalment is heavy on hardware, it looks set to retain the former's glacial smoothness along a copper wire - despite the fact that you now have integrated voice communication travelling down the same line as well.

It's also much easier to make contact with other players, with predefined messages announcing your intentions and taunting enemy corpses. For those of you permanently online, the new game integrates a browser plus email, discussion forums and the obligatory chat room.

As with most titles in the genre, *Tribes 2* games come in a variety of different flavours. There's Capture The Flag, as well as Capture And

Hold, which awards points based on your team's ability to control certain areas of the map. Siege is great fun, allowing players to either attack a base or defend it, and is similar in gameplay to the infamous Dustbowl level in *Team Fortress Classic*.

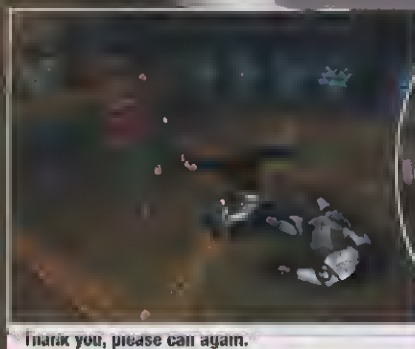
Deathmatch is exactly as you'd expect, with everyone out for themselves, and Rabbit revolves around a single flag carried by a single player, with points awarded to whoever can hold on to it the longest. The final two variations, Hunters and Team Huoters, see warriors fragging their opponents and ferrying the flags they were holding back to base.

As you can see, there's a lot to tell, and we'll tell you more once we get the final code. What is certain is that *Tribes 2* has lost the "love it or loathe it" qualities of its predecessor, and instead appeals to a much broader range of gamers thanks to top-quality graphics and landscaping, absorbing gameplay and single-player bots.

When it goes on sale in the US, it looks set to sell faster than pints of Guinness on St Patrick's day, but whether it will have the same impact in Europe remains to be seen. **EE**



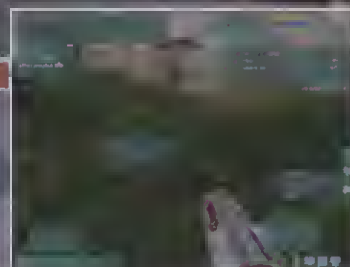
Dynamic weather conditions give visual realism a welcome boost.



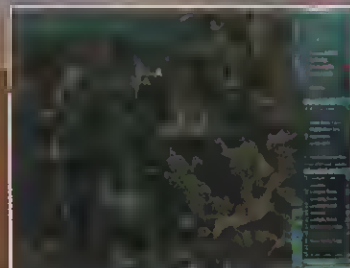
Inariak you, please can again.



Slinky boots and a huge gun. What more could a man want?



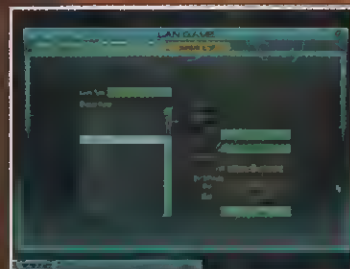
As part of training, you're given a detailed explanation of your HUD.



The *Tribes 2* battle arena, as seen by a commander.



A new race for *Tribes 2*, the rather menacing Bloderms.



Setting up a *Tribes 2* game, complete with bots.

You'll need Ninja hardware to appreciate *Tribes 2*, but it'll be worth it.

Way Out West...

DESPERADOS: WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

Scanning the horizon, *Keith Pullin* spots a cloud of dust heading our way



As you can see, attention to detail is one of the game's major selling points.



Entertainment in those days was predictable but always guaranteed good audience numbers.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Spellbound Entertainment Software
PUBLISHER Infogrames
WEBSITE www.desperados-game.com
OUT April

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ First true movie-like Wild West strategy game
- ★ Extremely challenging – not for wimps
- ★ Very clever enemy and civilian AI
- ★ Infallible 3D line of sight

Hheavyweight French publisher Infogrames has always been surprisingly approachable when it comes to previews, but even they have surpassed themselves this time. By mailing out fully playable code of *Desperados* to all major UK PC magazines, they're almost daring some opportunistic hack to turn a last minute preview into a sneaky exclusive review. It's a test of strength if you will. Those who resist the urge will be rewarded with beer, food and

future goodwill. Those who don't will be tortured with cries of "English pig dog!" and have dead animals sent to them in the post.

So, here at *ZONE* we've opted for peace and harmony and decided to wait for the full review code, which we are assured will be ready for next month (although we'll believe that when we see it). In the meantime we'll do our best to bring you the most detailed preview possible, and frankly that's going to be easy because *Desperados* is not short on stuff to shout about.

HARD AS NAILS

First off, *Desperados* is one of the roughest, toughest games we've ever come across. Even *Commandos*, the game it most closely resembles, is made to look like a stroll through the trenches in comparison to the ridiculous high-risk infiltration tactics John Cooper (the main

character) and his five desperate pals must endure.

And yet it all starts so easily. The first mission focuses on familiarising the player with the interface and controls. At no point is the lone Mr Cooper required to perform any heroics other than sneaking up on an old double-crossing mate to steal his horse.

Mission two on the other hand is an entirely different story. Suddenly you're in at the deep end. With an unconscious sidekick slung over your shoulder, your goal is to subtly punch, shoot and knife your way from one side of a ranch to the other in order to steal some horses and make good your escape. The developers will have you believe that the Mexican bandits patrolling the area are too pissed on Tequila to cause you any problems, but this is blatantly untrue. After restarting the mission for the 20th time, it becomes

clear that these Mexicans have no problem at keeping it together, even with a hallucinogenic worm or two inside them.

Their 3D fields of vision scan every nook and cranny of the estate, and should one of them suspect that a blade of grass is bent in the wrong direction, there'll be about 20 of the buggers all over it in a frenzy of twitching moustaches and nasal hair.

PRECISION ENGINEERING

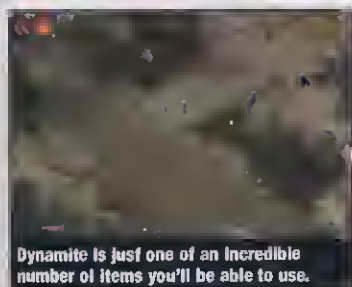
Desperados is all about precision. The graphics, though extremely detailed and hugely atmospheric, have been created with quick, efficient gameplay in mind. The trouble is, the interface itself could pose a potential threat to the way the game should be played.

In 1024x768 resolution, the characters and icons are extremely small, making it difficult for the mouse interface to provide the fluidity needed to perform rapid, multiple instructions. Ultimately, if you don't learn the hotkeys you'll be dead long before high noon. Another annoyance

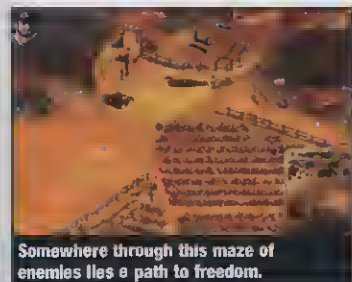
**BETA
TEST**



Not a bad little place if you can afford it.



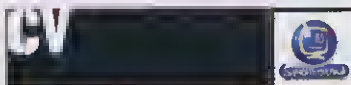
Dynamite is just one of an incredible number of items you'll be able to use.



Somewhere through this maze of enemies lies a path to freedom.

is the way the mini-map obscures part of the play area. This becomes infuriating when an intended target disappears behind it. Worse still, the enemy in question can still see you, and when he shoots you dead from his hidden location, it doesn't exactly put you in the best of moods.

To avoid quick deaths, it's usually a good idea to remain unarmed as you sneak about. That way if one of your renegades are spotted they'll be asked



SPELLBOUND

Spellbound has been around since 1994. It has hardly set the world alight with their past releases, but John Cooper and co could well change all that.

1994 *Perry Rhodan: Operation Eastside* –

Germany's most successful sci-fi series was converted into an equally successful game, apparently. Though outside Germany nobody's ever heard of it.

1997 *Airline Tycoon* – A fairly average airline simulation that somehow managed to sell over 150,000 copies worldwide.

2001 *Desperados* – Can it possibly be more successful than Spellbound's last two blockbusters? We think so.

a must if you have any desire to get past the first four missions.

WESTERN PROMISE

There's no doubt whatsoever that *Desperados* will be overflowing with classic spaghetti western ingredients, and some great new ideas to boot. Some of the items your gang can use include gas-filled balloons, mirrors, rattlesnakes in bags, dynamite, and Gatling guns.

“Desperados is one of the roughest, toughest games we've ever come across. Even *Commandos* is made to look like a stroll through the trenches in comparison”

to “stick ‘em up” before being punched unconscious, leaving the rest of the party to sort out the mess. OK, so it is a bit of a bind having to perform a daring rescue when there are more important things to get on with, but at least nobody dies – with any luck. Anyway, it goes without saying that *Desperados* will be the type of game where regular saving is

On top of all that, there are brothels, brawls, hangings and a little bit of romance thrown in for good measure. *Desperados* could just be the rip-roaring movie-like western game we've been waiting for. Let's just hope the interface and gameplay is perfected in time for next month, otherwise there could be a bit of a gunfight at the ZONE Corral... **PC**

WALKTHROUGH

RESCUING DOC MCCOY

The game's fourth mission involves rescuing your old mate Doc McCoy from the clutches of a crazed lynch mob. Unfortunately, the task is made nigh on Impossible by the fact that Doc is on a big wooden platform with a rope around his neck. There is, however, a way to succeed, though it's not for the faint-hearted...



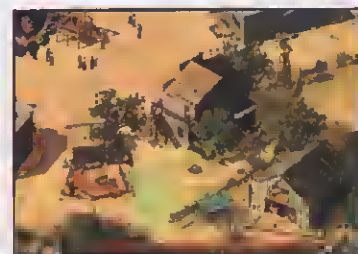
1 First you need to punch the crap out of the priest who is about to preside over Doc's hanging. With him laid out for a while the 'ceremony' cannot take place.



2 Move silently around the north edge of town, eliminating as many targets as possible. Remember though, if a civilian spots you they may squeal to a local ruffian.



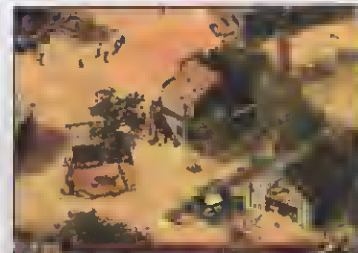
3 Try to shift John into a position just north of the town square. Again, it's most important to knife as many enemies as you can on the way through.



4 Using the barrel of TNT that should have been collected on the way through town, Sam can create a diversion to help John.



5 The Mexican sitting on the box to the north of Sam's position is more interested in the whore on the balcony than in any potential escape attempts.



6 Kaboom! As the wagon goes up in flames chaos reigns in the square. Tired right, John can nip in and grab Doc. All that remains is to find three horses and skin out.



It's only the first level of the game and already you're being propositioned.

Get your wands at the ready, it's time for **MAGIC & MAYHEM: THE ART OF MAGIC**

The long awaited sequel to *Magic & Mayhem* will be upon us soon. *Chris Anderson* looks forward to some fantastic gameplay in its purest form

CV

Charybdis

CHARYBDIS

Charybdis is based in sunny Nottingham and has been producing games for the PC since 1995. The team are all big fans of previous Mythos titles such as *X-COM* and jumped at the chance to make *Art Of Magic* when Virgin approached them last year. Here follows their efforts on PC thus far.

1997 *Spud* – A 3D adventure game that apparently features the company's 'Super-Look-Around-O-Vision' engine, whatever that is.

1997 *The Quivering (Spud II)* – Could this be the sequel to *Spud*? Why yes, I think it is. An enhanced version of the original engine made an appearance in the sequel.

1998 *Machines* – A competent real-time strategy game. *Art Of Magic* uses an enhanced version of the game engine used for *Machines*.



The first one was good, but underrated...



We reckon the sequel might rock big bells.



Big, ugly and hairy – but at least Chris Anderson writes a decent preview.



Worship at the temple of magic.



Proper 3D graphics. Hoorah.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Virgin Interactive
PUBLISHER Charybdis
WEBSITE www.magicandmayhem.co.uk
OUT May 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's the sequel to one of the most original and entertaining games made for PC.
- Incredible visuals. Look at the screenshots on these pages and tell us we're wrong.
- An intriguing blend of tactical challenges and straightforward hectic spell 'em' action.

If ever there was a title that demonstrated how important addictive gameplay is in the making of a classic PC game, *Magic & Mayhem* was it. The visuals were good, although not particularly impressive, but it had that undefinable quality that brought you back to the game time and again, a quality that eludes the majority of PC games released. The sequel promises the same brand of highly addictive gameplay, but

with some very noticeable improvements in other departments. An all new storyline (obviously) and many new creatures and spells have made their way into AOM, but so too has the arrival of 3D graphics, which will hopefully make the game look just as nice as it plays. Having seen many pseudo-3D titles in action recently, we were slightly sceptical as to how realistic the new 3D engine

sight resolution and fog of war, better creatures and effects with much more variety in scale. You can summon creatures from tiny speedy fairies up to huge lumbering mountain giants."

CHARACTER BUILDING

While *Art Of Magic* is essentially an action-oriented role-playing game, as was the case with its predecessor, it will not feature many of the 'heavy'

You can develop your character as you gain experience, choosing to go for strength, magic, or the ability to control larger armies.

was going to be, Paul Whipp, project manager and designer of the sequel, quickly put our fears to rest.

"We've designed the game so that you do not need to zoom or rotate while playing, but you can always zoom in for a close look or spin the camera to see what a castle looks like from the other side," he says.

"We've taken care to only deliver benefits from the 3D – better line of

elements from traditional RPGs. Character development and the magic system are kept simplistic so as not to alienate players who are not particularly keen on stat-heavy role-playing games.

Paul elaborates: "There are character types as such. You develop your character as you gain experience, choosing to go for strength, magic, or the ability to

control larger armies. There are people you will meet who will join your party too. We put gameplay first. A dedicated RPG player might think that just having three character attributes to spend experience points on will make things too simple... Not so! It makes the decision really interesting and means that you quickly see the effect of how you are developing your character. Do you want to sneak around in the background summoning wolves, demons or dragons to do your fighting, or do you want to charge into the thick of battle lashing out with lightning and incinerating your foes with dragon's breath?

"As well as the experience system, we have kept spell selection (the portmanteau) much the same as in the original, so your character is also defined by the spells you choose to take into battle.

"There is one significant enhancement to the portmanteau for multiplayer. You can choose your alignment and thus alter the costs of the spells. This makes it possible to play as a truly 'lawful' or 'chaotic' character – it's great fun!"

UNDER CONTROL

It's now a whole lot easier to put your might to work...

The single biggest problem with *Magic & Mayhem* was some of the key characters' uncanny ability to do the wrong thing at the wrong time. Leave one of them unattended and they would get themselves into all sorts of trouble, attacking creatures when they had no health, getting lost in the middle of an enemy encampment, etc. The problem was simple: you could not control the characters you needed to keep alive to complete a level – now you can. In addition to being able to bring other characters into your party for the first time, you can also control them and have them carry out tasks so they will now be a valuable aid during your missions, not a burden. Good thing too, we say.



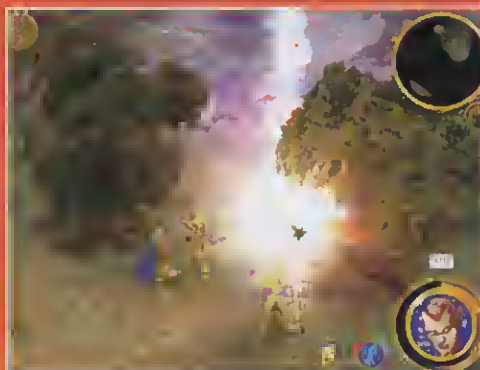
Do as I say and everything will be OK.

OLD FOR NEW

Art Of Magic has a brand new game engine at its heart, based on an enhanced version of the engine that powered *Machines*. You can see from the screenshots the level of detail developer Charybdis has lavished on the game. A highly convincing and spectacular spell effects will be the visual trademarks of AOM on its completion. It looks stunning even at this stage of its



Definitely a bridge over troubled waters.



It's so bright... I gotta wear shades.



No fires on the bridge please lads.

development, and with much tweaking planned further down the road we expect this title to stand out as one of the best looking RPGs for some time.

The in-game music has undergone a complete overhaul, too. The music in *Magic & Mayhem* was atmospheric, but had no real effect on the game. Charybdis is going for a more orchestral approach in the sequel, to reflect the harsher world in which the game is set. The music will now change dynamically to reflect what is happening in the game. This was planned for the first title but was not implemented due to time restraints.

Another significant change in the sequel is the introduction of more tactical puzzles. The timing-related and switch puzzles have been dropped to make the overall experience more entertaining. This suggests a move towards a much more action-based title than the original and will surely enhance the multiplayer game considerably.

Paul is keen to make the multiplayer side of the game as addictive and challenging as it was in *Magic & Mayhem*. "We've kept it much the same as the original, with Deathmatch, Instant kill and timed competitions," says Paul.



I'm a storyteller and my story must be told.



The usual 'fixed' viewpoint.

"The scoring works much better than in the original, so the timed matches are great fun. We can also play with eight wizards on the map, which is true mayhem, and you can have great fun playing any of the multiplayer modes on the Net. We have multiplayer set up so you can

a look at any of the first-person shooters or real-time strategy games around and it's easy to see where they drew their 'inspiration' from. The same can not be said for *Art Of Magic*, although Paul admits to having taken a look at the competition to see what they were up to.

You really can play the whole *Magic & Mayhem: The Art Of Magic* campaign with just the mouse, the onscreen buttons are kept to an absolute minimum

easily find people to play, even if you are a novice to Internet gaming."

THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE

One of the things that made *Magic & Mayhem* so enjoyable to play was there was nothing quite like it around at the time, and indeed, it still stands out as a unique title even in today's overcrowded PC games market. Take

"Almost all of our inspiration has come from playing the original," he says. "However, we spent a lot of time with other 3D RTS games like *Earth 2150* and *Ground Control*. They are good games, but we learned a great deal from their mistakes. We've kept the AOM interface amazingly simple. You really can play the whole AOM campaign with just the mouse, the

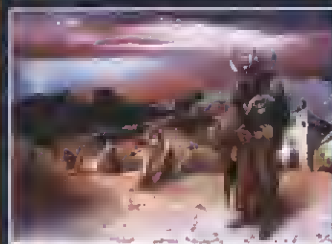
onscreen buttons are kept to an absolute minimum. We want you to play the game rather than struggle with the interface. We also spent some time with turn-based strategy games like *Heroes Of Might & Magic*, looking at how to give the player interesting decisions that enhance the experience."

From the sound of it, *Art Of Magic* will be as much of a tactical challenge as a highly enjoyable slice of gaming. We have yet to see the game in action, but all the signs indicate that Charybdis is heading in the right direction. The graphics are excellent, multiplayer has been improved, and all the elements that made the original so addictive have been retained. No prizes for guessing who's name will be top of the list when it finally comes in for review. **EW**

STORYBOARD

Getting the art right

As was the case with *Magic & Mayhem*, *Art Of Magic* will use its own game engine to trigger cut-scenes that develop the storyline when you come across key characters in the game. While this wasn't particularly impressive in the original title, the stunning visuals in *Art Of Magic* will offer a greater level of immersion, so the transgression from in-game action and story segments will be seamless. We don't know who the guy with the funny hat in the screenshot is, but no doubt he will play his part in the storyline at some point in the game.



And just who do you think you are?

A NEW DIMENSION

Zooming right along...

The developers of *Art Of Magic* thought long and hard before deciding to implement 3D for the sequel. Many 3D RTS titles have failed not through lack of imagination but through poor implementation of their 3D environments. For this reason, *Art Of Magic* will have a fixed viewing angle of the gameworld for ease of play, but players will have the option to zoom and rotate the 3D environment if they want to get a better view of the action.



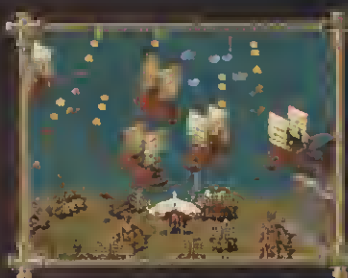
Zoom in to get a better view of proceedings.

*Think like a man of action
Act like a man of thought*



**"Like Age of Empires.
With knobs on."**

PCZONE



THREE KINGDOMS



PC CD-ROM

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INTERACTIVE
eidos.com

Oi!...CHRIS LONGPRE

Rhianna Pratchett pins down *Emperor: Battle For Dune*'s producer Chris Longpre and gives him a good pummeling

One of the few things we managed to agree on during our Most Influential Games Supertest (PCZ #100) was that Westwood's *Dune 2* was the pioneering force behind RTS games. In fact, *Dune* has become a phenomenon in the gaming world simply because the games have become more firmly entrenched in people's minds than the film, if not even the original books.

Believe it or not, there was gaming life before *Dune 2* – Cryo Interactive's unsurprisingly titled *Dune* was released in 1992. I'm probably the only person left in the country who remembers that game fondly, in particular because it allowed you to do a spot of worm riding, something I'm glad to report is in the new spinny 3D remix.

Although shamelessly eclipsed by the second *Dune* title, the original adequately established that there was a market for Frank Herbert's spice-drenched world on the small screen. Now, thank god, *Dune* has gone 3D and, let's face it, *Dune 2000* isn't going to keep things chugging along for much longer. Due for release this June, *Emperor: Battle For Dune* looks set to become another impressive notch in Westwood's RTS bedpost. But will it deliver the much-needed injection of inspiration into the *Dune* world?

When you need the answer to that sort of question, you don't speak to the monkey, you need the organ grinder. So we jetted off to Las Vegas in search of Chris Longpre.

Why have you waited this long to move into 3D, and why did you decide now is the right time? We decided we didn't want to use 3D for the sake of 3D; we wanted to use it to enhance gameplay and add beauty and depth to the environments. The diversity of the characters and environments make *Emperor* the perfect setting for an RTS. Also, we felt that the technology had finally advanced far enough and was accessible enough to the masses that we could use it effectively.

What new innovations, apart from 3D, does *Emperor* bring to *Dune*? We're adding whole new levels of strategy and tactics that haven't



Like an old friend who's just had silicon implants, *Emperor* is the same... but different.

been seen before in an RTS game, primarily using our non-linear campaign map. Rather than progressing through a static number of pre-defined missions, the player has to pick and choose which territories to attack based on the available information. Do I have any reinforcements for previously conquered territories? What is the strength of my enemies in the nearby areas? Can I gain any allies if I move into this territory? All these questions

doing so will give them access to those houses' technologies and units. This makes the number of meaningful combinations of units very high and we expect people will debate the best combination for some time.

What elements have you kept from *Dune 2* and *Dune 2000* and why?

We've tried to stay true to the overall theme of the *Dune* universe so that fans of Frank Herbert's *Dune* and *Dune 2* will immediately feel at home

storyline, but still stay true to the feel of the *Dune* world so we can appeal to everyone – fans of *Dune*, fans of *Command & Conquer*, and newcomers as well. We felt that if we followed the original story too closely, we might alienate people who are not that familiar with the characters and plot.

Most under-18s won't be too familiar with David Lynch's film or Frank Herbert's books. How have you kept the *Dune* universe fresh? The universe is enormous and open to interpretation, which is why we've seen so many different stories emerge from the original book. Characters evolve and branch off from the original story; new political intrigues surface and must be resolved. Stories can be tailored to the interests of new generations of gamers.

Why do you think the *Dune* universe is so appealing? The beautiful, lush worlds, the amazing and unique characters and the intriguing storylines all lend themselves to many stories and many ways to tell those stories. That's why

“We used 3D to enhance gameplay and add beauty and depth. The diversity of the environments and characters make this the perfect setting for an RTS”

CHRIS LONGPRE, PRODUCER ON *EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE*

must be answered before deciding how to proceed.

Also, we allow the player to customise his army like never before. Along with choosing one of three houses to play, each with unique and diverse units, the player will be able to form alliances as the campaign progresses. The player can ally with up to two of the five sub-houses, and

with the game. And although we are expanding on our traditional RTS model, we believe die-hard RTS fans, along with newcomers to the genre, will have a lot of fun with the game.

Why did you choose to follow an independent storyline, rather than use characters from the books?

We wanted to create our own unique

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

EMPEROR:

BATTLE FOR DUNE

PROFILE

CHRIS LONGPRE

The lowdown on
Emperor's main man

Name Chris Longpre

Developer Westwood Studios

Position Producer on *Emperor*

Age 33

Fave game Big fan of RPG games and I'm
also playing a lot of *Red Alert 2* at the moment -
I just can't get enough of *Yuri!*

Also worked on *Lands Of Lore 3*, *Into The Void*,
Doomtroopers and *Trivial Pursuit*





No more Mr Spice guy. Take the battle to the lush green planet of Caladan.

the *Dune* universe has remained a phenomenon for more than 35 years and has been retold in print, movies, TV, online and in games.

In the case of each house, do you play as an established character or along the lines of a new general working his/her way up?

Regardless of the house that the player chooses, he will begin as the new commander for that side and be in charge of its entire armed forces. Although the player will follow the individual stories and political machinations that arise during the campaign, he will begin and remain the house's commander, in charge of all that goes on in the battle. That was really the only way we could involve the player in the story – he must be in charge of the battle from the start.

You've used an engine custom-designed especially for *Emperor*. How has this enhanced the game and do you intend to use it for future upgrades/games?

Many technical issues, such as sand and rock visualisation and camera movement, are specific to *Emperor: Battle for Dune* and we

The engine not only adds beauty and depth to the game, but it's used in a way that will better allow the player to control the battle. The player will be able to control the camera to his benefit (zooming in and out, rotating the battlefield), but the camera movements will never become difficult to manoeuvre.

“The *Dune* universe is enormous and open to interpretation. Characters evolve and branch off, new political intrigues surface and must be resolved”

CHRIS LONGPRE, PRODUCER ON *EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE*

came up with unique solutions for each of them when designing the game's engine.

From the beginning, our main goal in using 3D technology was that it would serve to enhance gameplay.

Using real actors for cut scenes can sometimes be a bit hit and miss. What made you decide to do this and what do you think it adds to the game?

Westwood has a tradition of using high-quality cut scenes to advance the stories, and *Emperor* will be no different. We've hired top Hollywood

talent to portray our characters – including Michael Dorn from *Star Trek* as Duke Achillus; Mike McShane from *Who's Line Is It Anyway?* as Baron Rakan Harkonnen; and Vincent Schiavelli as the Harkonnen Mentat. We were amazed at how they brought these characters to life and added to the interactive experience we are trying to give the players.

What elements has *Emperor: Battle For Dune* borrowed from other Westwood titles?

Westwood pioneered the RTS genre eight years ago with the release of *Dune 2*. Since then, we have continued to build on our tradition of creating interactive and fun RTS games with successive *Dune* games and the *C&C* series. *Emperor* is a true RTS game – those familiar with *Dune* and *C&C* games will feel right at home with it, while newcomers to the genre will be able to pick it up with minimal effort. That's another element we're bringing to *Emperor*: gameplay for all skill levels.

How will resource gathering be managed when not on Dune?

Melange is the only resource in the game that can be used as currency, and it is only found on Arrakis [*Dune*]. When the battle moves to the other planets – the lush, green Caladan; the industrial wasteland of Geidi Prime; and the ice world, Draconis IV – the players will receive regular money 'shipments' to keep up production.

This adds an interesting layer of strategy to *Emperor*, in that it forces the player to truly manage his resources for building units and structures.

How many units will you be able to control at once?

The only limit to how many units the player can build and manage is how much money he has. We are allowing the player to queue up 99 units for construction and he will be able to do that until his money runs out.

How will you incorporate combat shifts between *Dune* and the home planets of the three main houses in the storyline?

The main campaign will be fought on Arrakis, otherwise known as Dune. Controlling this planet and the spice is the key to victory. For that reason, it is necessary to capture all the territories before the battle moves to the homeworlds. Only when the player has driven the enemy back to its homeworld and defeated them will he be able to claim victory.

How will the concept of folding space (basically, hyperspace travel using spice) be incorporated?



It's in 3D, but is it going to put Westwood back at number one?



WESTWOOD STUDIOS

An RTS pedigree to be proud of.

1992 *Dune 2* – where it all began.

1995 *Command & Conquer* – after *Dune 2* opened the door, *C&C* proceeded to kick in the windows.

1996 *Red Alert* – WWII-style RTS.

1998 *Tiberian Sun* – keeping the side up.

2000 *Nox* – Westwood's slightly dodgy foray into RPGs.

2001 *Red Alert 2* – hopefully Westwood's last 2D RTS.

Folding space allows the Guild to transport Heighliners across great distances, delivering cargo and even other ships. A local form of space folding is used in the game by the Guild NIAB tanks. They can effectively teleport themselves around the battle map for a surprise attack.

Could you tell us more about the five sub-houses you can ally with? Can you ally with more than one? And can you break alliances?

The player will be able to ally with up to two of the five sub-houses during the single-player campaign. This is by no means necessary to complete the game, but forming alliances will give the player access to additional units and structures, allowing him to fully customise his army.

The sub-houses include the native Fremen warriors, the Imperial Sardaukar soldiers, the tech-weapon-dealing Ix, the bioengineering Tleixu and the spacer's Guild.

Each of the houses has its own secret weapon. Can you tell us about how these will be used within the gameplay?

Each house has a super weapon, similar to the nuke or weather storm

in *Red Alert 2* – incredibly powerful and only available once the player has progressed to the top of the tech tree.

The Harkonnen Death-Hand missile makes a glorious and brutal return. The Atreides can terrorise and demoralise their enemies with the Hawk Strike. And an Ordos twist on mind control, Chaos Lightning, throws your troops into a berserk rage, killing anything in sight... even each other.

How have you enhanced unit AI?

We designed the AI with the goal of making it feel like you're playing against a real person, with all the uncertainty, surprise factors and various game strategies. Therefore, we developed a complex system that teaches the AI about map features and player strategies.

When a mission starts, the AI knows nothing about the map it cannot see, and will usually start a scout mission to push back the shroud and keep the fog-of-war away. After that, it uses the war strategies of the house it is playing to defend its base and start an offence. The AI is aware of unit positions it can see and will plan accordingly. It's good at finding your weakest link and hitting it – hard.



Give the Ordos enough grief and you can push the battle back onto their home turf.



Lights, camera, action. I think someone is trying to get Mr Lynch's attention.

Controlling camera angles can often be very problematic in 3D games. How have you dealt with this potential problem?

Camera controls have often been a bane to 3D RTS games in the past because they allow the player too much freedom. The player may zoom in too close or too far away, and not be able to get back to a playable position. On the other hand, if you don't give the player enough control, it's almost pointless to have a moveable camera.

We think we've found a good balance in *Emperor*. We give the player the ability to zoom in and out and rotate the battlefield, while still limiting movements to the extent that they don't become cumbersome or difficult to manoeuvre.

How have you used the sandworms in *Emperor*, and will we get a 3D riding session?

There are actually two kinds of sandworm on the planet Dune: the small worms that the native Fremen can control, along with giant, destructive worms that can devour an entire army.

If you ally with the Fremen, you will be able to train Fremen Fedaykin warriors. If a small sandworm turns up, the Fremen Fedaykin warrior will ride the worm and go on a unit-gobbling spree. After a couple of units, the worm becomes full and descends under the dunes once more, and the Fremen dies a glorious death.

As for the giant Shai-Halud worms, they are indestructible; your only defence against them is to not attract their attention. Any movement atop the dunes will tempt worms, but heavy equipment and shields are absolute magnets!

Fortunately, the computer informs the player when a large sandworm is in the area and the player will be able to visually track their movement on the map.

When is the game going to be released?

Emperor will be released this summer.

Have you got any plans to expand into similar/other genres with the *Dune* universe?

Only time will tell... [E]

PLAY TEST

The proof of the game is in the playing, so I snuck a look at the latest preview code

Westwood has faithfully kept a lot of the gameplay elements from *Dune 2* and *Dune 2000*, so fans of the series will find that harvesting, building and troop creation have remained pretty much the same, even down to the sultry female voice that announces "unit deployed". This could be seen as a bit of a cop-out on Westwood's part, but why mend what's not broken?

The visual texture of the 3D environment has been well thought out, even down to the shadows of the individual units, which add some much-needed depth to basic military manoeuvres. Disappointingly, I didn't

actually see a worm, despite bouncing around on the sand for a while, which usually means 'get it here' to your average worm. But I know they're out there...

In fact, the visual depictions of sandworms and worm riding seem to have been greatly influenced by David Lynch's film, as seen in the lightning flashes heralding the worm's approach, and the giant worm's mouth rising vertically, jaw-like from the sand to swallow a spice harvester.

Even down to the smallest battles, *Emperor* has a much more intense atmosphere than previous *Dune*

incarnations, more akin to *Sudden Strike*. The 3D engine seems pretty slick, and from what we've seen so far the camera angles are much easier to handle than in something like *Force Commander*.

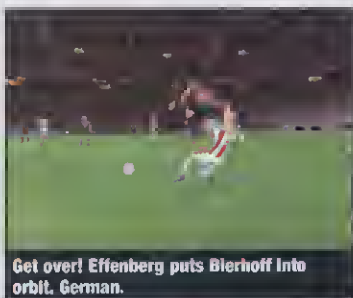
The AI has also been improved – and the enemy is a lot sneakier and likes to home in on your weak spots. A few of the units, such as the scout bikes, are the same as in previous games, but the new units such as the Devastator and the Minotaurs look particularly impressive, promising some spectacular, heavy-on-the-lightshow battles. Let the spice flow.



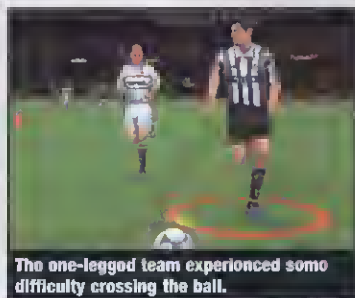
Dwight Yorke scores, and for once it's not with a stripper.



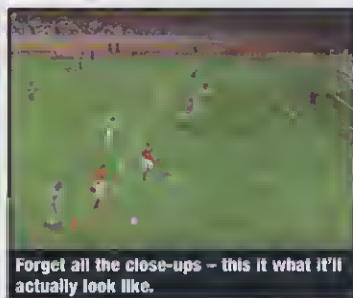
If you haven't guessed, that's Sonny Anderson getting a volley in.



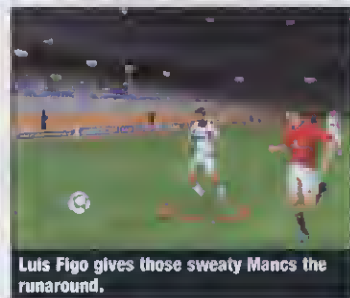
Get over! Effenberg puts Bierhoff into orbit. German.



The one-legged team experienced some difficulty crossing the ball.



Forget all the close-ups – this is what it'll actually look like.



Luis Figo gives those sweaty Mancs the runaround.

UEFA CHALLENGE

In a move that will send shockwaves throughout the gaming world, **Steve Hill** previews a football game

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Infogrames
PUBLISHER Infogrames
WEBSITE www.infogrames.com
OUT May 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ It has a UEFA licence
- ★ It's made by ex-Gremlin people
- ★ It's endorsed by Dwight Yorke
- ★ And Kevin Phillips

In the face of a dearth of tangible information, here's an apocryphal tale. On the Monday after the tragic death of Princess Di, a brace of UK journalists and a PR mook were dispatched to Paris to look at Infogrames' forthcoming UEFA game. Having recently acquired the prestigious licence, a French development team had begun work on what was to be its showpiece title.

Despite it being very early days in the development cycle, we were afforded a chat with a barely literate Frenchman, who enthusiastically demonstrated some rudimentary motion capture of a headed goal. So far, so pointless, but the otherwise forgettable trip was to take on greater

significance on the journey back to the airport.

Road travel in Paris is a haphazard experience at the best of times – as Di 'n' Dodi discovered – but our taxi turned out to be piloted by what appeared to be Henry Paul's more reckless brother. Paying little heed to speed restrictions, he spotted the turn-off for the airport with seconds to spare and slewed across three lanes of motorway traffic, grazing a concrete abutment while three ashen faced Englishmen sat in mute terror.

LICENCE TO KILL

Fortunately, we survived, unlike the game, of which little was ever heard again. The licence was eventually used on *UEFA Striker* for PlayStation and Dreamcast, and released on PC in the guise of Microsoft's *International Football 2000*. It also surfaced in the long-forgotten *UEFA Manager 2000*, a game Infogrames admits was mainly poor and is now being revamped.

Infogrames has high hopes for *UEFA Challenge* though, and is backing it with an almost vulgar amount of marketing. This includes signing up no less than 10 European

footballers, allegedly representing a combination of established stars and up-and-coming talent. For the record, those who have put pen to paper are Sonny Anderson (Lyon), Oliver Bierhoff (AC Milan), Stefan Effenberg (Bayern Munich), Luis Figo (Real Madrid), Stefano Fiore (Udinese), Lionel Letizi (Paris St Germain),

Sheffield-based veterans Gremlin a while ago, and it is they who make up the core development team for *UEFA Challenge*. Naturally, the spectre of *Actua Soccer* hangs heavily over them, a series that Infogrames purports to respect, while conceding that successive versions were somewhat rushed. They claimed that this

“Infogrames has signed up no less than 10 European household names, representing a combination of established stars and up-and-coming talent”

Stephane Dalmat (Paris St Germaine), Kevin Phillips (Sunderland), Dwight Yorke (Manchester United) and Gianluca Zambrotta (Juventus).

While they may not all be household names, suffice to say none of them would have any trouble stepping into the Chester City side.

WE CAN SEE YOU SNEAKING OUT...

Likewise, they could all comfortably turn out for either of the Sheffield clubs, which is where the game is being developed. Some of you may recall Infogrames purchasing

wouldn't happen with *UEFA Challenge*, and promised the team the time and backing to come up with a quality title.

That time runs out in May, by which stage they should have put the finishing touches to a game featuring 40 stadiums, 146 teams, weather effects, pitch deformation, players shrieking at each other, and an injury system that will see players nursing damaged limbs. Most interestingly, if their team is losing, the crowd will often walk out in disgust. Whether gamers will display a similar reaction remains to be seen. **[E2]**

TRAIN SIMULATOR

Rhianna Pratchett had a Lego train set once. What she really wanted was a Krark Prince of Darkness Zoid

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Microsoft
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/games/train simulator
OUT May/June 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Hundreds of miles of highly detailed recreated rail routes
- ★ Detailed locomotives, including *The Orient Express* and *The Flying Scotsman*
- ★ Real-world rail challenges in a dynamic 24-hour environment
- ★ Comprehensive route editor which allows you to build your own routes

I've never been able to muster much enthusiasm about trains, but I have sympathy for those who do. When I was asked to go and look at Microsoft's *Train Simulator*, the very words filled me with a kind of quiet dread. How could anyone think about taking a form of transport that is fundamentally boring in the first place, and actually try to simulate that boredom?

However, after seeing the sim I wouldn't say I was actually a convert,

"You are an engine driver in charge of steam, diesel and electric locomotives, driving across 600 miles of real-world routes"

but I've a little more appreciation for what the thermo-clutching masses are on about. And the fact remains that some people just adore trains – usually quiet men of a certain age who remember when trains were interesting, romantic even, and when a new à la carte menu didn't just mean the same crap as before only with a sprig of parsley on top.

This sim, which seems destined to do for trains what *Flight Simulator* did for planes, puts you primarily in the role of an engine driver in charge of one of a number of steam, diesel and electric locomotives and allows you to drive them across 600 miles of authentically landscaped real-world routes. Alternatively, you can just take a passenger's eye view and spend the time admiring the digital scenery.

You're not going to be driving the 5.15 from Liverpool Street to

Southend either, because Microsoft has chosen to go down the more commercially viable 'period' route. This puts you in the driving seat on routes such as *The Flying Scotsman* from Settle to Carlisle in the 1920s, or a modern-day freight train through the Rocky Mountains.

Each train requires a different style of driving, from extending the flange valve and cranking up the ratchet handle on the steam locomotives (which will undoubtedly be the game's strongest selling point), to the random button pushing and dial watching involved in manipulating the current electric beasts. It's every trainspotter's wet dream.

One of the most unique things about the package, and one that will reach deep into the hearts of train enthusiasts everywhere, is the route editor package included with the game, which contains many of the original tools used to create the sim. This will allow you to create your own rail routes and locomotives, plus terraform and decorate the landscape to suit your whims.

There's no doubt that this feature makes the possible scope for *Train Sim* huge. Expect to see new routes, locomotives, landscapes and buildings, spreading like Internet wildfire after the game's release this spring. These people are dedicated.

Boring or not, *Train Simulator* is breaking new ground for sim games, and if it attracts the same kind of audience as *Flight Sim*, its success is assured. But let's hope it stops there; a couple of years from now I don't want to be previewing *Caravan Sim* – all the thrills and spills of open-road caravanning from the comfort of your bedroom... ☹



Drive the trains through rain, wind and snow.



Not only can you drive these beasts, you can shunt them, too. Oooh, hold me back.



Get in the driver's seat and get close to the... er, action.



Fancy a go on this one?

SEGA



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

ファンタシースターオンライン

YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY HERO....

...THE WORLD IS FULL OF THEM. DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, DIFFERENT SPECIES. NEW FACES BECOME OLD FRIENDS AND GREAT ALLIES. SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON CO-OPERATION, BECAUSE IN THIS ADVENTURE FOUR HEROES ARE BETTER THAN ONE.

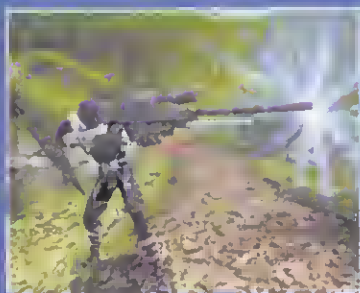
www.dreamcast-europe.com



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Exclusive to



Dreamcast.

PC ZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the **ZONE** reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've just got to buy and which to avoid

MISSION STATEMENT

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day, and which ones you should point and laugh at on the shelves. For that reason, **PC ZONE** works a little differently to any other magazine in the UK.

★ Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. We're all massive gamers and we don't mince our words. If there are problems in a game, then we'll tell you about them, even if it means falling foul of certain big names in the industry.

★ What's more, we will only review finished games, which means that any bugs we see within the game will be reported back to you. On occasions we are forced to review from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the final boxed product.

★ Occasionally, this means that we can't review the multiplayer side of the game at the same time as the single-player review, as the servers aren't up and running. When this happens, we won't fudge the issue and claim that 'multiplayer works well', we'll wait until the servers have been running successfully for a month before running a full second review in our Online section.

★ We also make sure that we test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In the office we have access to a whole range of different gaming PCs, from a lowly P233 up to the latest 1GHz behemoth. If we spot differences between the minimum specifications and real-life testing then we'll let you know in the review.

★ Our scoring system is the most honest in the industry. If a game is average, then we'll give it 50 per cent. If it's not worth knowing then we'll give it the burial it deserves. On the flipside, you won't find many games getting 90 per cent or above, the pre-requisite for our Classic award. Since issue 85

(and the introduction of the new scoring system), we've only given out eight Classics and this proves that a game has to be pretty special to get the award.

★ We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field, which means that each of our reviews can be placed in context with other games of that genre. You won't see a first-person shooter being reviewed by an RTS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the important titles in that particular field.

★ Every now and again you might disagree with the treatment we've given a game. That's where our Feedback section comes in. This is where you get to have your say in **PC ZONE**, and where your rumblings are answered by the person who wrote the original review in the magazine.



WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Accclaim 020 7344 5000 • Activision 01895 456700 • Anco 01322 292513 • Blue Byte (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • Codemasters 01926 814132 • Cryo 01926 315552 • Eidos Interactive 020 8636 3000 • Electronic Arts 01932 450000 • Empire Interactive 020 8343 7337 • Europress 01625 855000 • Gamlin Interactive 0114 263 9900 • GT Interactive 020 8222 9700 • Hasbro Interactive 020 8569 1234 • Infogrames 0161 827 8000 • Interplay 020 7551 4222 • Microids (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • Microsoft 0345 002 000 • Mattel 01444 246333 • NovaLogic 020 7324 8900 • Rage Software 0151 237 2200 • Take 2 Interactive 01753 854 444 • THQ 01483 767656 • Ubi Soft 020 8944 9000 Zabloc 01628 332233

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% If a game scores 90 or above, it probably means it's quite good. Classics are games that transcend their parts with the sheer quality of the finished product, creating an experience that will leave an indelible mark on your gaming memory. So, not bad then.



80-89% In this category you'll find great games that just fall short of being truly exceptional. From slightly-flawed genius to a perfectly-executed traditional concept, these might not be true Classics – but they're still worth having.



70-79% These scores are not necessarily a condemnation to gaming hell – In fact, we consider any game that falls into this category as worth checking out. Not Classic or excellent, just very good.

50-69% In this range you'll find games that go from the just-above-average to the alright-really-honest. They're usually good fun but have a limited long-term appeal. Read the review and find out if it's really what you're after before you decide to part with your cash.

20-49% These games just manage to keep their heads above the excrement, although a title scoring in the 20s is probably pretty poor. You can find a game that plays reasonably in this category, but you've been warned.

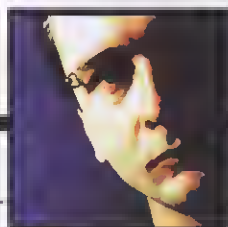
0-19% Some games are born pants and some have pants thrust upon them. These games shouldn't have been released. Avoid at all costs.



MEET THE TEAM

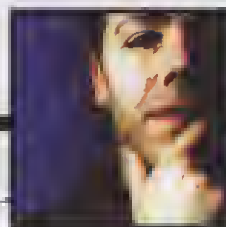
All **PC ZONE**'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

What's your favourite game character?



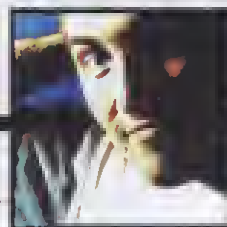
DAVE WODDS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Black & White*

Q*Bert



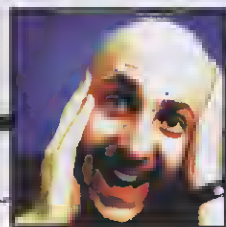
RICHE SHDEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Sudden Strike*

Commander Jameson



MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Black & White*

Sam & Max

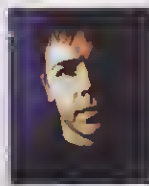


MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Hostile Waters*

Duke Nukem

GOING CHEAP

★ **DEPUTY EDITOR** Richie Shoemaker



Aren't PC games great. I'll rephrase that. Aren't some PC games great. Even greater still is the fact that PC games are relatively affordable compared with their console counterparts (unlike the hardware, obviously). It wasn't always so, of course. When *PC ZONE* first crawled out of the primordial ooze back in 1993, PC games on CD-ROM were quite an investment, a novelty even, regularly selling for upwards of 45 of your English pounds. Today, few of us would be prepared to hand over such an amount for a game, especially after shelling out £300 on a new graphics card every six months. Nope, £30 seems to be the going rate for new games these days, and more recently we have regularly seen new releases hitting the shelves for £19.99, mid-price



titles that finally realistically reflect the game attached to the price tag.

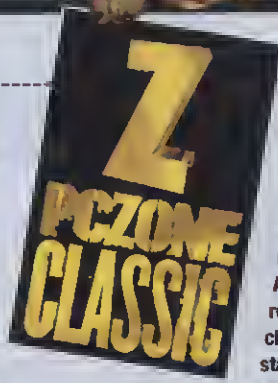
Not that we're saying a £20 game is any worse or better than those demanding more money – certainly not, for example, in the case of *Serious Sam* – but rather than blow their games up to be the next best thing, publishers are beginning to concede that a game doesn't have to be the best in its genre to get attention. *Serious Sam* certainly isn't the best first-person shooter around, but for the price it's more than worth a look.

Codemasters' online driving game *Insane* is another one. Released at £29.99, the UK-based publisher decided to drop the price to £20, a move that in turn made the game far more attractive to game buyers, many of whom probably wouldn't otherwise have been tempted to buy a driving game, let alone an online one, no matter how good it may be. So basically then, the best game reviewed over the next 20 pages is also the cheapest. Makes a nice change if nothing else. Not that I care, I get all my games for free.

A CLASS ACT

Certain games deserve to be elevated above and beyond the mass of titles on the shelves. For that reason we've made it hard for a game to receive our coveted Classic award and a score of 90 per cent and above. Each one will have to show originality, take their respective genres to new heights and represent a major step forward in PC gaming. Given this criteria, it would make us look a bit stupid if we awarded two or three every issue, and over the past 16 months since the introduction of our new scoring system we've only given out eight Classics.

This doesn't mean that all games scoring less should be ignored. Rather, the Classic tag points to



the games that we can call true masterpieces and benchmark titles. The ones that are going to influence the direction of PC gaming in the near future.

And it doesn't stop there. All review scores in our Top 100 are changed over time, to show their standing as and when new titles are released. So, a game that

received 90 per cent a year ago, may not still be considered a Classic today. This means that on any given month you can find out exactly what we consider to be the best games in each genre.

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70 **OIL TYCOON**

71 **TIMES OF CONFLICT**

71 **HEIST**

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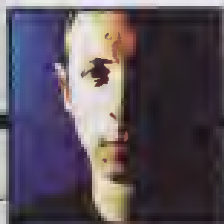
72 **PACMAN: AOVENTURES IN TIME**

100 **BUDGET**

No cash? Not to worry, here are some cheap games.

102 **FEEOBACK**

Come on, get it all off your chest.



CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Anarchy Online* (beta)

Mine, from *EverQuest*



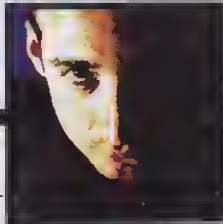
STEVE HILL
GENRE Football, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING Games with wheels in

Flintanvil Steelheart



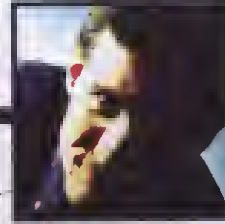
PAUL PRESLEY
GENRE FPS, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *The Sims*

Mavis Beacon



KEITH PULLIN
GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Black & White*

Even after all these years, it has to be Mario



PHIL WAND
GENRE Action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Tribes 2* (beta)

Saturn Bomberman – from the best game of all time

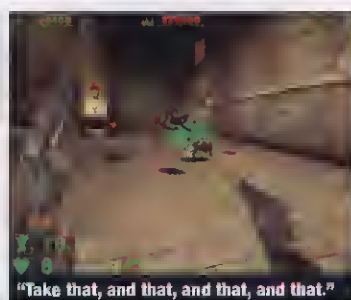


RHIANA PRATCHETT
GENRE RPG, RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Cossacks*

Lilarcor (the talking sword from *Baldur's Gate II*)



After three... "Reach for the stars..."



"Take that, and that, and that, and that."



This is where the real fun begins.



Linear levels, but superb humorous touches.



"Dr Jones, I presume?"



Take them down before they butt you into the clear blue sky.

SERIOUS SAM

★ £19.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out April

Dave Woods is a serious person. In fact, most of the time he's downright miserable. Here's a game that nearly made him smile



IN PERSPECTIVE

Serious Sam is more arcade than any other shooter out there. *Kiss Psycho Circus* is similar but not as much fun. *NOLF* is boring and *Half-Life* still rules in single-player.

Kiss	██████████
NOLF	██████████
Half-Life	██████████
Serious Sam	██████████

It's often said that playing computer games is a worthless occupation, filled with people who are desperately trying to waste time before the final checkout. Well, I can go along with that.

And being a Coventry City supporter, I can say that I'd rather spend the next few months playing superfluous floss with my mouth half open rather than scouring page two of the Teletext tables looking for a way to escape the inevitable. With Manchester United on top of the league and still in the European Champions' League, football isn't providing me with anything resembling fun at the present time. Thank goodness for light relief, provided this time by Croteam, the Croatian developers of *Serious Sam*.

From the early public test that was posted on the Internet about nine months ago, it was obvious that *Sam* wasn't going to break any records. It isn't a *Quake III* or an *Unreal Tournament*, and doesn't pretend to be in the same league as the new *Wolfenstein* game that may or may not be released in the near future. (At last count it was being dragged back to the treatment room to

screen at once. It also means AI that doesn't progress past the static-trigger run-at-you sequence that's been around for years, serious firepower and linear levels that you can't backtrack to, punctuated by secrets and arenas that you have to clear before you can progress onwards.

There are two crucial differences though. Where *Doom* was sinister and scary,

engine, and in this day and age I'm always ready to be impressed by a team that's willing to strike out on its own rather than brown-nosing the big boys. So, instead of resting on the laurels of an existing engine, Croteam has lovingly slaved over its own version, which can handle huge outdoor expanses (eat your heart out *Team Arena*) and, more importantly, deliver huge opponents and plenty of them on screen at any one time. It works too – well. A good job really, as this is pretty much the only trick *Sam*'s got going for it.

“*Serious Sam* takes the parameters defined by the original FPS, *Doom*, and stretches them beyond all recognition”

take advantage of the new *Team Arena* code.) What it sets out to do from the outset is to take the parameters defined by the original FPS, *Doom*, and stretch them beyond all recognition.

DOOM-U-LIKE

What this means is loads (and I mean loads) of monsters on

Sam is bright and packed with some damn fine humour. I'm not going to spoil any of the set-pieces for you, but the much-documented suicide bombers that charge at you screaming are almost worth the reduced admission price alone.

The game is also backed up by a serious proprietary 3D

SHOW-OFF

Before I deliver more praise though, it must be said that this is also the source of one of the biggest problems in the game. Like a clumsy kid eager to show off in front of his mates, *Sam* regularly tries too hard, placing literally hundreds (alright, I



The government is finally forced to admit that the foot-and-mouth crisis is out of control.



The first big boss. I'm going to hide behind this statue of Jesus.



The gorgeous 3D engine will hopefully appear elsewhere in the future.

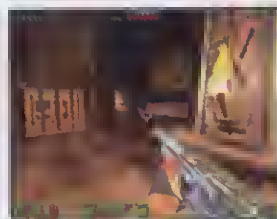
Big, but not actually that hard to kill. Just circle strafe away from the lasers.



WALKTHROUGH

TIME TO GET SERIOUS

Let Dave run you a nice warm bloodbath...



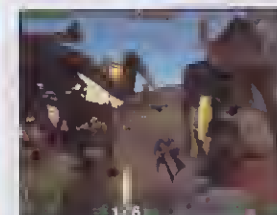
1 *Serious Sam* can seriously affect your health. If you've been abusing drugs or are prone to paranoia, we suggest you look elsewhere for your thrills, because this game isn't going to help your fragile grip on sanity. Look, everything's quiet. There's a megahealth over there and no one to see me nicking it.



2 Of course, you should have expected the shit to hit the fan. This is the sort of innocuous event that can trigger merry hell in Sam's backyard. As soon as you grab the health, the prison bars slam down and you hear screams and shouts. If you've got the guts to look around, you'll see loads of unpleasant things charging at you.



3 If you've played *Doom* or *Kiss Psycho Circus*, you'll know the drill. Start off by firing, clearing a path and using that to back off, firing wildly. You're bound to hit something. When things get a bit close for comfort, it's time to circle strafe. Yup, it still works after all these years.



4 And there you go. Trouble is, later on in the game things get a lot harder and the rulebook goes out the window. If you can get past this lot without resorting to the quick save key every other second, you should take pari in our readers' challenges. We'd be scared of you.



Look at the lens flare on the... ooof.



Any game with flying scantily clad women has got to be worth a punt.



Now is it the green wire or the red wire?

exaggerate a bit) of creatures on screen. It might look impressive, especially on a high-end system, but it's almost impossible to play without hitting the quick-save key almost as much as the fire button. As you can imagine, this gets pretty tedious. You could turn the skill level down, but this just makes the rest of the game far too easy.

However, some of the arena battles are amazing, and the

looking at a title that comes close to my idea of perfection.

CHEAP THRILLS

As it is, you can't get away from the fact that *Serious Sam* is an excellent no-brainer. I've come in for some serious abuse from certain quarters recently for my treatment of *No One Lives Forever*, a game that I marked down for its lack of AI and linear levels. So you might be surprised to see the

“Dodging from building to building, firing off rockets at a creature about half a mile away is a gaming experience unlike any other”

desert backdrops and huge robotic walkers, along with some of the best and most visual weaponry we've ever seen in a game, have to be seen to be believed. Dodging from building to building, firing off rockets at a huge creature about half a mile away while keeping one ear out for the suicide bombers and one eye out for the deadly green balls that track you down wherever you hide is a gaming experience unlike any other. If this was actually combined with a game of real pedigree instead of *Simple Sam's Shoot-Out*, you'd be

mark I've given *Sam*, despite it receiving similar criticisms. There is one simple – yet crucial – difference between the two though: while *Sam* is great fun to play, *NOLF* is just plain boring. Also, *Sam* is a budget buy, and at £19.99 it's worth buying just for the arcade blast of fighting off the weird and wonderful creatures that Croteam has created.

OK, it's a simple game and it's way too short – don't expect the single-player game to last much more than a day or two if you're adept with a gun. You also need a serious system to play it with the

detail turned up and a frame rate that actually enables you to aim and shoot (start thinking about a PIII-500). However, any game that makes me laugh and swing my head about trying to dodge bullets has got to be worth £20.

Buy it, don't expect too much and you won't be disappointed with *Sam*. He's the sort of bloke who you meet at every party – loud, a little bit obnoxious, not too bright, but a whole lot of fun at the time. The only trouble is, you might not want to wake up next to him the morning after. **[C]**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII-300
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** BMB graphics card **WE SAY** A 16Mb 3D card, 128Mb and a PIII-500. Don't get out of bed for anything less

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Beautiful to look at • Funny
• Pure arcade shoot-out • Cheap
DOWNERS Too short • Too hard in places • Pretty stupid really

81 Seriously good fun

MEET THE TEAM

Croatian codeshop Croteam get into their game

Despite hailing from a country that's not exactly renowned for its humour, *Serious Sam* is packed with amusing little touches, such as this secret that you can find early on in the game. These freaks are actually the developers and they're completely harmless, although they do follow you around and halt you with helium-fuelled greetings that can get on your nerves after a while. Thankfully, you can shoot them in the head when you get bored. And then feel hugely guilty about it afterwards.



The brains behind *Serious Sam*.

HOW MANY SAMS DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE A LIGHTBULB?

We don't know the answer to this question because at the time of this review the game wasn't on the shelves. However, we have played it over the LAN in the office and although it's not enough to persuade us to move over from *Counter-Strike*, it's a lot of fun in standard deathmatch mode, with *Quake III*-like jump-pads adding to the general mania.

Two problems stand out. Firstly, there aren't enough dedicated multiplayer levels (only five are included in the final release), although this should change swiftly after the commercial release, especially when you consider that an admittedly complex level editor is going to be shipped in the box. Secondly, and rather more tricky to rectify, the weapons are seriously unbalanced. The Tommy Gun is way too accurate, way too powerful

and kills within a few seconds, no matter how far away from your opponent you might be.

Luckily, deathmatch isn't the only teatime in *Sam's* cap. You can also play any of the single-player levels in co-operative mode, and the hordes of creatures that constitute a serious menace on your own become a lesson in carnage when you've got a few mates on your shoulder.

There's no real game – when you die you just respawn and carry on the slaughter, but it's an excellent way to relieve tension for 10 or 15 minutes. With a bit of clever implementation, this feature could have been much better. As it is, it's a bonus and a harmless diversion, nothing more.

As always, we'll bring you a full online update in our regular new supplement, as and when servers become populated.



When you're faced with this sort of challenge, it's far better to be playing co-operatively.

"Game of the Week."
★★★★★ – amazon.com

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

www.kingdomunderfire.com

**"Kingdom Under Fire offers challenge, requires thought, provides action
and by its very nature, breaks several previously set moulds."**

★★★★ – bigbluespot.com

**"Kingdom Under Fire favours neither RTS nor Role-Playing, preferring to excel at both."
PC Gamer**

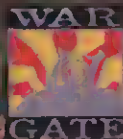
**"Kingdom Under Fire may be one that upsets the traditional strategy apple cart...
Powerful magicians and witches give the game its own unique sense of style."**

83% – Strategy Player

**"Once you have done the first few levels, you will be met
with a surprising, but welcome addition to the RTS genre."**

90% – UK Gamers Online

OUT NOW!!!



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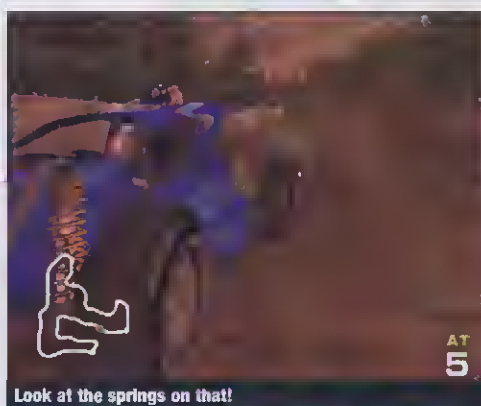
"Sunshine on my shoulder, makes me happy..."



Hello, I'm driving a buggy in a virtual reality computer game.



He's certainly caused a splash.



Look at the springs on that!



"Fly me to the moon..." Alright then, don't.

OFFROAD

★ £24.99 • Rage • Out now

Steve Hill struggles to think of a remotely interesting introduction to yet another off-road game. And fails

IN PERSPECTIVE

We had an off-road Supertest last month, but there is little evidence to suggest *Offroad* would have swayed the voting. At best it may have made it in at the arse end of the pack, as shown in the 'special' chart below.

Colin McRae Rally 2.0

Rally Masters

Insane

4X4 Evolution

Offroad

Tragedically arriving too late to be included in last month's rally and off-road Supertest, history will not record whether *Rage's* contribution to the genre could have been a contender.

Picture the scene: five grown men are locked away in a secret room deep in the bowels of *ZONE*, intensely debating the merits of the cream of the non-road-based driving games currently available for the personal computer. The jury is about to give its verdict when a small boy appears wielding new evidence in the form of a shiny silver disc.

A hush comes over the crowd as the game kicks into life. It

proves to be such a sensation that it elbows the opposition aside and snatches a memorable victory. Could this scenario have happened? We'll never know.

We can have a pretty good guess though, and if we were gamblers we would definitely err on the side of caution. In fact, there's no guarantee that *Offroad* would have even made the shortlist, despite the obvious relevance of its bleakly functional name. It's not the worst game

"The sensation of trying to grip the road is like trying to guide a blancmange over a trampoline with a stick"

ever made (that's *Heist*, reviewed on page 71), but it certainly isn't going to be looming in Colin McRae's rear-view mirror. At best it'll be a speck on the horizon,

struggling some way behind the leaders, caked in the mud and grime of its superiors.

Enough of the motoring analogies, and anyway it's not supposed to be a rally game, it's an off-road game. The difference? Buggies instead of 'proper' cars, and actual races instead of lone pursuits. Six (count 'em) specially designed vehicles compete in each race, which take place over such geographically disparate locations as the Swiss Alps,

see here. It's an off-road game for Christ's sake. It's even written down for you in great big letters. What is there to say? What? The handling? Oh god...

TRAMPOLINE

The handling, as it goes, is fairly unspectacular. The sensation of gripping the road is noticeable by its absence, and initially it feels like trying to guide a blancmange over a trampoline with a stick. Not great. Thankfully, the tracks are wide to enough to absorb a bit of errant driving, except for the narrow ones, on which you'll find yourself clipping the side of the road in infuriating fashion.

To compound problems further, the courses are littered with hazardous obstacles. There are few more frustrating experiences than tearing along at pace only to be brought to a standstill because



Do you see what we mean? Is that really any place to leave a lorry?



Get out of the way or I'll stab you in the eye.

some twat has left a barrel in the road. And what's going on with the diggers? Halt the tracks seem to be set on building sites – surely an oversight by the organisers?

Basically, it seems that every course has been deliberately designed to catch you out. You can easily go from leading a fairly close race to being last while trying to extricate yourself from an advertising hoarding, a dangerously positioned pile of logs or even an unnecessarily sturdy bollard. You then have to waste one of your nitro boosts getting your godforsaken buggy back up to speed.

Yes, it's got nitro boosts in it, three per race, the unleashing of which gives you five seconds of increased speed, and – coincidentally – creates a noise that bears a passing resemblance to something from *Knight Rider*. It

nothing else, these gimmicky boosts underline the fact that *Offroad* is not particularly geared towards the simulation crowd.

Nothing wrong with that, but the arcade approach does tend to give developers carte blanche over the laws of physics. And while it's unlikely to have Isaac Newton spinning in his grave, the gravity setting does make for a healthy dose of violent bouncing around on the perennially undulating tracks. Not content with simply tossing the buggy into the air, the whole screen moves in sympathy and it can have a nauseating effect, particularly if you are under the influence of prescription drugs.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

So what else do you want to know, you ungrateful dogs? Oh yeah, there's a pseudo-career mode,

which essentially adds longevity to the game by giving you something to aim for. Starting in the fourth division, a few decent

“While it's unlikely to have Newton spinning in his grave, the gravity setting does make for a healthy dose of bouncing around”

performances will see contract offers being tabled by rival firms. These will usually be dependant on you reaching a set number of points over the course of a season, enabling you to begin the next term in a shiny new buggy, replete with ludicrous name.

In theory, this gives you a greater chance of mounting a bid for the championship, and the accompanying promotion to a higher league. However, it's not necessarily a good idea to sign every contract offered, as you

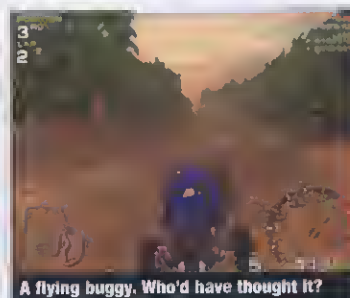
can just be getting used to the handling of your present car, only to find your new one entirely unwieldy, thus jeopardising your

chances and making you look a tit. Also, buggies are randomly updated with new pieces of equipment such as exhaust pipes, so if you stay in the same one for long enough it will eventually evolve into 'Super-Buggy X'.

Ultimately, *Offroad* is a test of anger management, and in this reviewer's case at least, the frustration of dicking about on the deliberately annoying tracks isn't quite tempered by the excitement of the occasional bloodless victory. That said, it's easy to



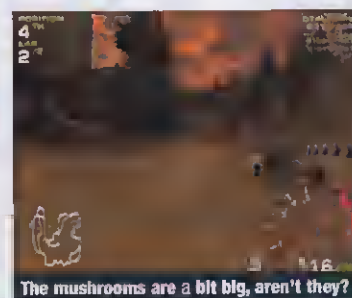
Drive a pick-up truck in the pissing rain.



A flying buggy. Who'd have thought it?



That'll be the dried-up riverbed then.



The mushrooms are a bit big, aren't they?



A great big chopper stir up the dust.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII-266
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb graphics card **WE SAY** It struggled a fair bit

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Easy to get into • Knight Rider sound effects
DOWNERS Unnecessary obstacles • Erratic handling

64 Get off my land



DUCATI WORLD

★ £29.99 • Acclaim • Out now

Steve Hill buffs his helmet and squeezes into the leather trousers. Of course he doesn't, he's reviewing a game

Conventional wisdom dictates that Ducati is the Ferrari of the bike world. It's a fairly glib claim, and one that we're not in a position to dispute, although the bike on the packaging is red, so that's at least one similarity. The reason that we know about the packaging is because young Barbarian Korda actually had to be dispatched to the local software emporium to purchase a copy of the game, momentarily feeling the hopeless indignity suffered on a regular basis by members of the public. *Ducati World* should have appeared on these pages last month, but the review copy proffered mysteriously didn't work, and no replacement was forthcoming, boxed or otherwise. A suspicion that Acclaim didn't want us to review the game is based purely on circumstantial evidence. There must have been a problem at the post office or something.

FAULTY GOODS

As such, the game has now been on sale for some weeks, and there's even a remote possibility that you've actually bought a copy. If so, attempt to reseal the package, take it back to the shop and tell them that you were given two copies for your birthday. Accept nothing less than a full refund, or goods of equivalent value. It's a stinker, and a slur on the name of the good

people of Ducati. The Italian firm has been manufacturing motorcycles for more than half a century, the entire range of which appear here, a total of over 40 road stallions. They are presumably all accurately modelled, and certainly look the part, although in real terms the only noticeable effect on the game is that the older bikes are slower and the newer ones are faster. This is taken to ludicrous extremes, and the first of the 1950s models is farcical, trundling along at barely walking speed.

EARLY ODOORS

That's the least of your worries though, as the game is marred by choppy graphics, washed-out colours, chronic clipping and, worst of all, crap handling. Riding a bike in a decent game can be a tricky business, but when it starts slewing all over the road and mounting the walls it's time to do something else. To be honest, the game looks as though it's in the early stages of development, and had we been told that it was due out next year it wouldn't have come as a surprise. What do the game testers do? Sit around cupping their balls all day, by the looks of this muck.

If you're still interested, there's a fairly comprehensive career mode, which essentially attempts to be a two-wheeled version of *Gran Turismo*. A selection of modern and vintage bikes can be bought, entered in the relevant races, and upgraded

with the prize money. Licences have to be acquired before certain races can be entered, and a series of tests are carried out, offering a mildly diverting aside.

Overall though, *Ducati World* is an absolute shambles. Now where's that receipt? **CZ**

IN PERSPECTIVE

There aren't that many great bike games around, and *Ducati World* has done nothing to change that. EA's *Superbike* series is probably your best bet.

Superbikes 2001

Castrol Honda Superbike

Motocross Madness

Ducati World

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 266
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
16Mb 3D card **WE SAY** P400, 128Mb of
RAM

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS You can do wheelies • Well-structured career mode • Built-in grabber
- DOWNERS Twitchy handling • Choppy graphics • Rank music

20 Ducati world of hurt

Be evil?

BLACK & WHITE™

Black & White™
Only one god
can rule.

The wait is finally over for the ultimate god game from Peter Molyneux's Lionhead Studios. *Black & White™* is a unique strategy game where you and your very own learning creature can strive to take control of eight tribes, each with a full range of natural behaviour, on the beautiful 3D paradise island of Eden. As their god, it is then up to you how you want to rule - Good or Evil?

If you opt to be evil, you can guarantee that the people will worship hard and toe the line through fear alone. A harsh and brutal regime can either reap rewards in terms of productivity or you could see the dead and injured soon pile up as the number of fit and able dwindle.



To celebrate the release of *Black & White™* on PC CD-ROM, HMV are giving away an exclusive FREE set of *Black & White™* chime balls. Simply reserve your copy of the game at your nearest HMV store before 6th April.

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F1 RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

★ £29.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

Martin Korda digs out his crash helmet and climbs into the hot seat

With the new F1 season having just kicked off, we're bound to see an influx of F1 games hit the shelves over the coming months. And first out of the pit lane is Ubi Soft's *F1 Racing Championship*.

As far as F1 games go, it's a fairly competent attempt at recreating the high-speed action of the real thing. It's a slickly designed simulation, which offers a lasting challenge and has plenty of user-friendly options.

However, its major problem is that the AI is ludicrously aggressive. At times, races deteriorate into a destruction-derby-type farce, as opponents barge you out of the way and send you skidding across a gravel trap with your nose cone and tyres in tow. You can turn the damage off, but let's face it – you can only ram your way to victory so many times before it gets boring.

SETTING THE PACE

Customising *F1RC* is made easy by some excellent difficulty setting options, which allow you to break yourself in as quickly or as gently as you like. However, once you've turned off all the driving aids, *F1RC* becomes fiendishly challenging. In fact, it's so hard that unless you're a diehard F1 nut, you'll probably find it more annoying than enjoyable, as you'll initially spend more time in the pits repairing your car than you do racing.

Generally the presentation is pretty impressive, with TV-style banners showing the distances

between you and the cars in front and behind. Although, for some strange reason, you're rarely given this information when you cross the start/finish line, which is when you really want it the most.

Graphically, it's superior to both *GP3* and EA's *F1 Championship: Season 2000*, and while this is hardly a major achievement, *F1RC* is currently the best-looking F1 game around. It also runs on a pretty low-spec

machine – we tried it on a Celeron 400, and while it hardly ran like a dream, it was more than playable.

F1RC also has several other serious shortcomings. Firstly, some of the rule interpretations are baffling. You can blatantly cut across huge swathes of the

“Thanks to GPS, every track bears an excellent resemblance to the real thing”

machine – we tried it on a Celeron 400, and while it hardly ran like a dream, it was more than playable.

TRUE TO LIFE

F1RC's claim to fame is that it's the first F1 game with 100 per cent accurately recreated circuits. Forge F1 Crammond and his camera-wielding cronies; every track has been modelled using a GPS. So if you actually give a toss about this kind of thing, rest assured that as you bomb down the back straight of Hockenheim, it's exactly the right width and length, and bears an excellent resemblance to the real thing.

It's also good to see that the AI can make just as many mistakes as you, with each driver being modelled on their performance from the 1999 season. More experienced drivers such as Michael Schumacher are less likely to make a mistake than newbies when you're pushing to overtake them. However, it's somewhat of a rarity that they'll use blocking manoeuvres, as each driver tends to just stick to the racing line.

FAIRGROUND ATTRACTION

Unlike *GP3*, you can comfortably play from a behind-the-car viewpoint as well as an in-cockpit one, which is good news for those of you who prefer a more arcadey experience. Once you get used to the handling of the cars, you'll find that *F1RC* can be hugely satisfying. The only problem is, you may not last that long.

Despite its versatile customisation options, the game

circuit without getting penalised, only to be given a 10-second penalty for accidentally over-running a corner. Pit communications are decidedly average, and as I've already mentioned, you're constantly being pushed off the circuit.

If you're desperate to drive round in circles while other vehicles crash into you, then go to the fairground and have a go on the dodgems.

However, if you're a true F1 fan who's looking for a new challenge and you can ignore the over-exuberant AI, you'll find *F1RC* is a fairly entertaining and rewarding Grand Prix game. Just don't expect anything amazing. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 300
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO NEEDS** 8Mb
3D card **WE SAY** PIII 450, 128Mb RAM
and a 12Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

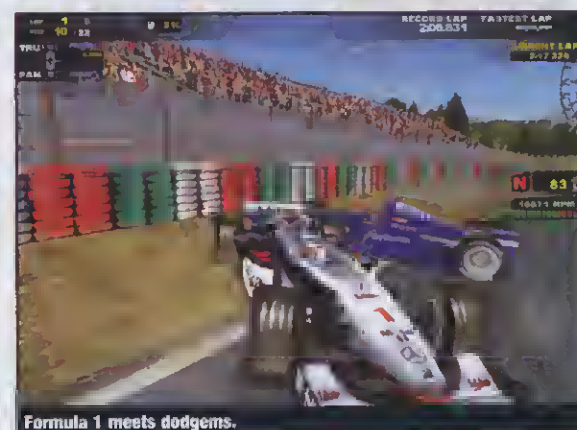
UPPERS GPS-modelled circuits •

- Hugely challenging on higher levels
- Slick presentation • Easily customised to your ability level • Split screen, as well as LAN multiplayer options

DOWNERS Average pit

- communications • Overly aggressive AI • Strange rule interpretations • No tutorial • 1999 season's cars and drivers

70 Middle of the grid



IN PERSPECTIVE

EA's *F1 Championship: Season 2000* is easily the best of the F1 bunch, providing an excellent tutorial, as well as some hugely entertaining gameplay. If realism is your thing, then Geoff Crammond's *GP3* is more than worthy of your time.

F1 Racing Championship

GP3

F1 Championship: Season 2000

Be good?

BLACK & WHITE™



Released 6th April

Offer ends 6th April 2001. Subject to availability at participating stores only while stocks last.

Black & White™

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If you decide to be a 'good' god, your people may be loyal, but they may also lose any zeal and devotion to you, taking advantage of your kind nature. To aid you in your decision making you have two advisors offering comments, hints, advice and clarification as you play. It soon becomes clear that only one god can rule the world. If you're sharp enough, it might be you.

If you are a fan of god games such as Populous, Symdicate and Theme Park, *Black & White™* is an absolute must have.

"*Black & White™* is as captivating as it is ingenious - Buy it right now or miss out on one of the most significant moments in PC gaming history. Pure genius." 95% PC Zone March 2001



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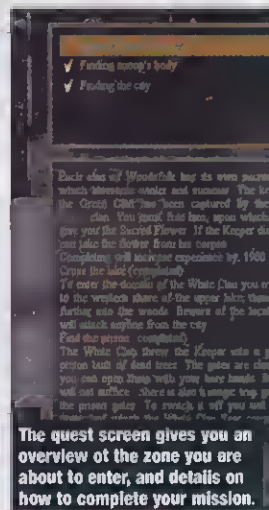
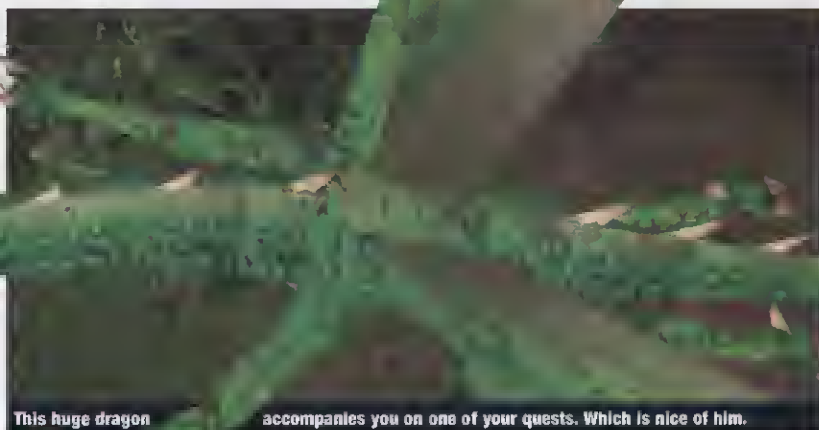
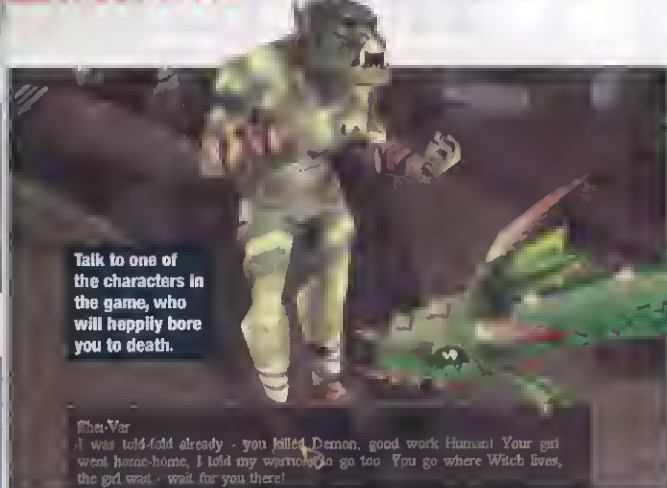
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EVIL ISLANDS: CURSE OF THE LOST SOUL

★ £29.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

It's an RPG, it's 3D. It's **Chris Anderson**, with the lowdown

You can almost imagine the makers of *Evil Islands* sitting down and trying to come up with ideas for a convincing storyline. They must have had a pretty hard time of it, because the best they could come up with is a 'hero' who has lost his memory, leaving the player to help him on his quest to find his identity. Not the best basis for a thrilling plot, since this has been used in so many games before, and while admittedly *Planescape: Torment* had this identity crisis scenario as its backbone, it did so with a lot more panache.

Something of a lame start for *Evil Islands* then, and the game itself feels a bit shaky too the first time you play it. It's a top-down effort, with fully zoomable and twisty rotatable camera controls (if you know what I mean) but it feels a bit clumsy in use. The landscape lies past as you struggle to get to grips with the user-unfriendly view interface. With a little practice though, you'll be navigating your hero Zak (yes he's actually called that) through the world of Gipath with consummate ease. Despite its clumsiness, you'll find the 3D camera actually comes in useful

in many parts of the game, unlike in some 3D titles where it's simply there for show. As for the game itself, there's very little in *Evil Islands* that will surprise seasoned role-playing veterans, either in terms of execution, or in the missions you are tasked with as you travel from one game zone to the next. The village in which you begin is home to various characters who send you on quests. Zone in to the correct part of the map and you'll be presented with a mini map denoting points of interest and telling you where to go. Make your way to the quest point, killing

small creatures on the way in the usual manner (hit them with whatever weapon you find lying about and mess around with spells), carry out your task then return to the village for another quest and quite often a chat with a villager that furthers the plot. In truth, *Evil Islands* is quite tedious to begin with, and many people are unlikely to get too far into the game, due to some extremely dull and repetitive quests. The storyline is totally unconvincing, a fact not lost on the characters in the game, who deliver their lines with supreme indifference and without a hint of enthusiasm. If I wasn't reviewing this game, I would have left it for

dead after a couple of hours and never gone back. But, of course, I had to persevere, and eventually I found some hidden gems of gameplay.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Baldur's Gate II has a much stronger storyline and deeper gameplay than *Evil Islands*. *Darkstone* is more action-oriented than *Evil Islands*, though equally unoriginal.

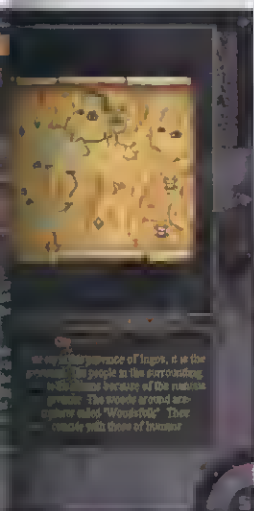
Baldur's Gate II	████████████████████
Evil Islands	██████████████████
Darkstone	██████████████████



There are some neat spell effects in battle. Here's one of them.



Check it out. You can make your own weapons.



Oops, lost Zak. Oh, there he is in the middle of that big fire.

HIDE AND SNEAK

Sssssh, quietly does it...

Unlike many RPGs, you will need to use stealth to a large degree in order to complete missions. Many of your adversaries are way too difficult for you to kill, so you will find yourself crawling about and sneaking around them, timing your movements precisely to avoid detection. This adds an extra dimension to the game, and is a huge challenge in some cases.



If you don't fancy a rumble with this guy, you can employ stealth.

DIY RPG

While *Evil Islands* is essentially a standard role-playing game, there are several things that make it stand out from the crowd. One of them is the ability to create your own weapons and spells, often from components you find on creatures after you've killed them. Visit a craftsman in the village and a buy/sell screen will come up. Obviously, you can buy and sell things, but there are much more interesting things to do here than go shopping. At the top of the screen you'll find blueprints for weapons. Go into the item construction kit, choose a blueprint for the weapon you want to make, add the components, click 'Construct' and hey presto you have a new

weapon. You can deconstruct this weapon later and add better components to increase its power. It's a neat touch, and it makes you feel like you have a great degree of control over the weapons your characters use in the game. The same can be done with spells (you can make your

more lasting appeal than some of its contemporaries.

You can also use experience points you've gained from killing things and completing quests and increase your character's abilities on this screen. Physical attributes can be enhanced, as can magic abilities, and again in this respect,

“While *Evil Islands* is essentially a standard role-playing game, there are several things that make it stand out from the crowd”

own from blueprints and add various effects that dictate what the spell does in combat) and this tinkering about with various facets of the game is one of the things that gives *Evil Islands* a

El is putting character development into your hands, as opposed to using the dated 'levelling up' system used by so many RPGs. Ultimately though, this flexibility not enough to hide

the fact that at its heart *Evil Islands* is a simplistic RPG that adheres to traditional genre concepts and eventually becomes repetitive at later stages. By the time I reached the ice world (which appears to be quite far into the game), I felt I had seen all there was to see and done all there was to do.

Strangely, however, *El* is one of those games that has a mysteriously addictive quality, and I found myself coming back to it time and again for no discernible reason, even though the gameplay is far from exciting. Approach this game with low expectations and you may well find yourself hooked after a few hours play. Just don't expect anything revolutionary. [C-]

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor: PIII 233
Memory: 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** You would be safer with 128Mb RAM. The 3D camera comes at a price

PCZVERDICT

- UPPERS 3D camera helps gameplay
- Make your own weapons and spells
- Big game by RPG standards
- Wide variety of creatures to fight with
- OWNERS Terrible voice acting
- Repetitive gameplay at later stages
- Game slows down in some areas
- Ridiculous plot

69 As addictive as it is predictable

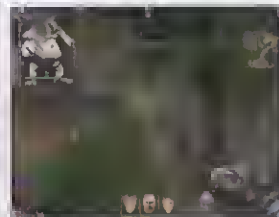
WALKTHROUGH

KILL THE PIGS

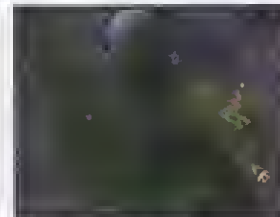
This is a rather typical quest in *Evil Islands*. You've been asked to locate a quarry and kill some pigs. Yes, I know, it doesn't sound too exciting. Follow me, I think I know where the pigs are...



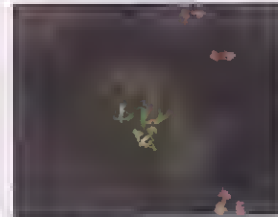
1 Our heroes set off in search of the pigs. The red spot in the top left corner of the map shows them exactly where they need to go to complete the quest.



2 We've found the quarry, and the pigs are round here somewhere too. Slight problem, there's a big Cyclops guarding the entrance.



3 I'll soon get rid of him. Zak walks round the mountain, luring the Cyclops away from the entrance so the others can look for the pigs.



4 The Cyclops is gone, the pigs are now dead. After such a difficult quest, our heroes sit down, tell tales and eat bacon sandwiches.



Underground tunnels are now even more complex.



Most of the buildings are very detailed, especially at night.

THE MOON PROJECT

★ £29.99 • Mattel • Out April

Giant steps are what Keith Pullin takes, walking on the moon. Let's hope his legs don't break

When we reviewed *Earth 2150* a year ago, it stunned us to the core. It looked fantastic, it played well and it had a unique multi-window interface that was totally innovative. In short, we thought it gave its peers a fair old kick up the arse – and we like that in a game.

Unfortunately for the Polish/German development team, the awards, glamour and adoration of sexy RTS groupies

IN PERSPECTIVE

Though definitely a game to warm the cockles of the most ardent RTS fan, we can't see this appealing to those who are into something like *Ground Control*. *The Moon Project* is right at the top of the hardcore strategy scale, so just make sure you've got the stamina to stick at it.

GROUND CONTROL

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

BATTLE ISLE IV: THE ANDOSIA WAR

EARTH 2150

THE MOON PROJECT

everywhere had to be put on hold after a surge of impressive sci-fi strategy games appeared soon after. *Ground Control*, *Homeworld* and *Battle Isle IV* all conspired to pummel *Earth 2150* back into obscurity. And, until now, that is where it has remained.

MOON LANDING

The Moon Project brings *2150*'s talents back into the spotlight, though not necessarily with the flurry we might have hoped for. Instead of expanding and taking previous innovations to the limit, this follow-up concentrates on merely fine-tuning what is already there.

“In true *Terminator* style, your devout killing machines will ruthlessly pursue their quarry... often into an ambush”

The research tree has been bolstered ever so slightly from the original, so all three warring sides benefit from brand-new vehicles and weapons. Most notable of these is The Lunar Corporation's FatGirl unit, the Fatima Whitbread of ground-assault vehicles. It you equip this beast with the right weapons (preferably the new Earthquake Generator), you'll find both the Eurasian Dynasty and

the United Civilised States scampering away as fast as their earthly legs will carry them.

But don't worry, the universally brilliant AI will leave your troops in no doubt as to what to do if your enemies do turn tail. In true *Terminator* style, your devout killing machines will ruthlessly pursue their quarry until the bitter end. Trouble is, in most cases the fleeing units are luring you into an ambush in a remote crater on the dark side. When it comes to dirty low-down battlefield tricks, *The Moon Project* plays host to most of them.

The fact that you can choose from three different sides was

and then transports them down to the moon surface. The Eurasian Dynasty, on the other hand, needs a 'Gruz' unit on the surface to initiate building of any structure. The UCS also has its little quirks; the most obvious being that they

overbearing. In fact, it's here that we finally get to understand why *Earth 2150* dropped so rapidly from grace. The answer, quite simply, is that the interface has some dastardly gremlins lurking within. By this we mean that clicking on a building or unit doesn't always produce the

information you're seeking. No. To obtain statistics about your currently selected unit you have to then click the 'selection' icon and, frankly, this is time consuming and annoying. When you want a flowing gameplay experience, nothing ruins it more than redundant mouse-clicks.



A training exercise goes well back on Earth.

THE MOON ROCKS

Away from the rigours of the interface, there's no denying that *The Moon Project* is polished in every respect. There's even a map editor for the brave few who fancy creating their own ludicrous lunar landscapes.

And what can we say about *The Moon Project*'s graphics engine? Even more catastrophic weapon and explosion effects have been added and the ever-impressive luminescence of nighttime vehicles and buildings still leaves you mesmerised.

are the only side who can't actually build a mine and so have to send vulnerable harvesters to gather resources. Thankfully, there's a tutorial for all three sides, and unless you want to start splashing and flapping about in a very deep pool, we suggest you pay very close attention to them.

Yet even with these heavyweight tutorials, lightweight strategists may find *The Moon Project*'s interface just a little too



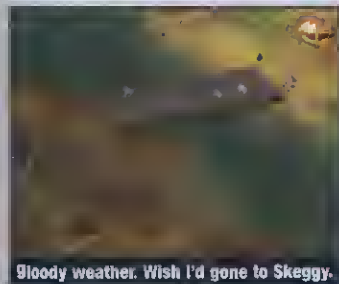
Another building bites the dust in spectacular fashion.



A UCS powerplant feels the might of the Lunar Corp's electro cannon.

MOON WEATHER

Despite what politicians and rich entrepreneurs say, the moon probably won't be such a desirable holiday destination in the 22nd century. Not only will you have to put up with bands of marauding terrorists and huge robots, the weather's shite, too. Ibiza this is not. In the artificially created atmosphere of a lunar Club 18-30 holiday you can forget sun, sea and sex. The only wetness on this doomed rock is the rain and snow.



Gloomy weather. Wish I'd gone to Skeggy.



Did anyone bring their snowboard?



Some air units find a sitting duck.



Death and destruction everywhere.

The only downside graphically is the abundance of grey, lunar landscapes – but then, what else do you expect? You're on the friggin' moon!

Yet another area where this game maintains its predecessor's excellence is in the online department. Multiplayer games can be tweaked to suit everybody's needs and regardless of whether you play over the Internet or LAN, you'll find your every whim catered for.

Beware though, on the Internet you might struggle to find fellow players due to the wide variety of online RTSs already available.

NEXT STOP MARS

Despite its undeniable enthusiasm, you can't help thinking that *The Moon Project* is just a stopgap before the true *Earth 2150* sequel, in the same way that *Tiberian Sun* was for *Red Alert 2*. This doesn't make *The*

Moon Project a bad game though. All we're saying is be wary of shelling out £30 for what is essentially a minor update of a very good game. **EW**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
200Mb HD space, 4Mb 3D accelerator
card **WE SAY** PIII 500 with 64Mb RAM
and 16Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Fantastic lighting effects and explosions • Great tactical variation between the three sides • Level editor • AI accurately portrays the side you're fighting for
DOWNERS Severely overcomplicated interface • Dull landscapes

74 Nice game, but thirty quid for a poxy update? The check...

ANNE MCCAFFREY'S FREEDOM: FIRST RESISTANCE

★ £29.99 • Red Storm Entertainment • Out now

Where's the humanity? **Keith Pullin** desperately looks for signs of life on Earth

My name is Angel Sanchez and I used to have a life..." moans the lead character in the intro movie to Red Storm's latest book conversion. This empathetic reviewer knows exactly how she feels, because like her, yours truly has been stuck in the same oppressive hole for the past week.

Post-invasion Earth really is a miserable place to be, especially if it comes with the name *Freedom: First Resistance* stuck to it. This third-person action/adventure is an extension of the nondescript sci-fi series by Anne McCaffrey, which features Earth as a raped wasteland governed by a ruthless alien race known as the Catteni and their corrupt human puppets.

Virtually every enemy you encounter will know the colour of your eyes before they die.

Multiple playable characters are *Freedom's* only upside. The player can select three characters from a pool of five for each mission. Characters such as Leo, Jimmy, Claire and Angel all have differing skills, so there's a smattering of RPG and strategy decisions to make when you assemble your team. Furthermore, you can control these characters separately or as one unit while you're actually in the field.

Unsurprisingly, when it comes to the crunch there's little real difference between the characters. The only time we found it essential to have one particular character on a specific level was when Claire's athleticism was required for the

"Freedom's main problem is that it aspires to be a stealth game like *Metal Gear Solid*, as well as a high-tech *Matrix*-style blast"

Indeed, the very game you see before you is a bubbling cauldron of ideas that McCaffrey herself would have included in her next novel had she the time (or inclination) to write it. So, with more than 7,000 lines of dialogue and the complete co-operation of the Dragonrider herself, you'd expect *Freedom* to at least offer a few salient characters and half-decent plot twists. In reality, we're presented with a game that struggles to find its identity from the beginning.

WHAT AM I?

Freedom's main problem is that it has aspirations of being a stealth game along the lines of *Metal Gear Solid*, while simultaneously wanting to be a high-tech blast like *The Matrix*. The result is that *Freedom* is more of a one-on-one *Oni*-style outing, making it one of the least subtle games ever released for the PC. If you're looking for surprise and anonymity throughout the game's 18 levels – forget it.

television studio mission. Even then it was only a case of using her extra long jump to leap across a large gap on the stairs.

The lack of invention is apparent throughout. Graphics are poor by current standards and the interface seems to prohibit the use of weapons while you're moving. Slowdown also rears its ugly head time and time again – even when you're using a 1GHz PC with 256Mb of RAM.

A NOVEL ENDING

Ultimately, *Freedom* is a blockbusting disappointment. Action/adventures have long surpassed this primitive stage of development and to think that some innocent gamers may be hoodwinked into buying it because of the McCaffrey influence is a very real and sobering thought.

Our advice: steer clear, even if you are a fan of the books. It will leave you frustrated, angry and incapable of speaking politely to other human beings. **PC2**

IN PERSPECTIVE

There are so many other futuristic adventures you could buy instead of this. *Deus Ex* springs instantly to mind and you certainly can't go far wrong with that.

Freedom: First Resistance

Deus Ex

The Nomad Soul

Metal Gear Solid

Messiah



TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII 500,
64Mb RAM, 3D acceleration and the
patience of an aged care assistant

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Can select team at start of mission

DOWNERS Awful graphics • Terrible gameplay • Poor interface • Totally unoriginal

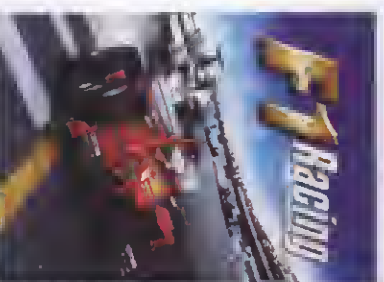
38 *Freedom* has its price, and it's 30 quid too much



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The Only Racing Game Using Satellite GPS Data



"Looks and feels as close as we've seen to a real F1 race, let alone a game"

PC Format - 90%

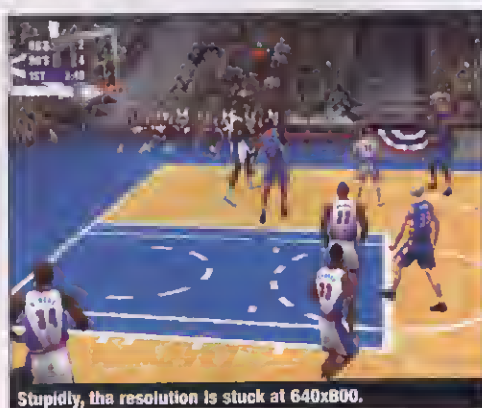




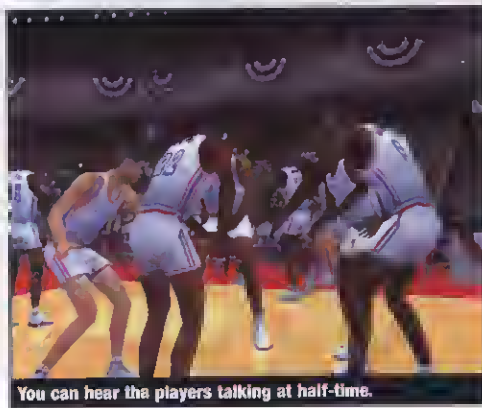
Ha might have retired, but you can still play Jordan in the one-on-one mode.



"Look at that, it's floating in the air." Basketball on acid.



Stupidly, the resolution is stuck at 640x480.



You can hear the players talking at half-time.



The '50s teams sport great crewcuts and jolly tight shorts.

NBA LIVE 2001

★ £34.99 • EA Sports • Out now

Mark Hill wanted to be a basketball player, but he was 4ft too short. He can still dribble though

EA Sports really has the PC games market cornered when it comes to major sporting simulations – *Equestriad 2001* notwithstanding. Cricket, rugby, F1 racing and, of course, football are all given an annual make-over. This usually consists of slight gameplay tweaks and improved graphics to make the most of the latest machines.

NBA Live 2001 is no different. It's hardly distinguishable from the previous instalment and, like every other EA game, is extremely polished, from the gentle rap music and easy-to-navigate menus to the realism of the players. EA has made a move towards greater simplicity, closer to *FIFA*'s interface than last year's *NBA*, which means you can jump

into a game straight away. Unfortunately, it also limits the number of options and doesn't let you set the resolution or graphical detail.

For some reason, EA has also gotten rid of the player creation screen, where you could make a player, graft a photo of yourself onto his face and put him in your favourite team. Nostalgics can still find the All Star teams of all the past decades – back to the 1950s – but, inexplicably, there are no three-point shootouts or slam-dunking competitions.

MIGHT AS WELL JUMP

In the unlikely event that you're a keen follower of the NBA, you'll recognise every player, who now chat to each other as they walk into the arena. Actually hearing

IN PERSPECTIVE

Inside Drive is still immensely playable, while the other *NBA Live* challenger, from Fox Sports, was absolutely rubbish. If you're after your first basketball game, pick up *Live 2000* from the bargain bin.

NBA Live 2000

NBA Live 2001

Fox's NBA Basketball 2000

NBA Inside Drive

their voices makes a big difference, and brings the series one step closer to the real thing.

In true *FIFA* style, your players can perform a series of beautifully animated skill moves to dazzle their opponents. But basketball is all about position and possession, both in defence and attack, so you

don't have to worry about losing the ball within seconds of getting it, as you so often do in *FIFA*. Here you can stop and think about what you're going to do next, keeping an eye on the clock at all times and trying to break through the defence. Defending is more about covering than trying to steal

its supreme playability). The problem is that, as with all the EA Sports titles, you should only get it if you haven't bought any of the previous titles in the last few years. As always, check out the budget stands in your local game shop for a cheaper, and virtually identical, *NBA Live 2000*. [C]

"If you're a keen follower of NBA, you'll recognise each player as they chat to each other while walking into the arena"

the ball which, unless you're playing in arcade mode, usually results in a foul.

The game modes are pretty straightforward and include the usual quick game, full season and play-offs. There's also a franchise mode for people with far too much time on their hands. It's basically a series of seasons through which you can build up your team, drafting in new blood at the start of each campaign. We'll stick to a quick match with a mate, thank you very much.

NBA Live 2001 is definitely a good game and probably the best basketball title available (Microsoft's *NBA Inside Drive* is not in the shops anymore, despite

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** P450 with 64Mb
RAM and 16Mb card, otherwise get an
older version

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Great animations • Players
Interact • Tactical play
DOWNERS Minimal changes to last
version • Less options than usual •
Still no European teams

78 Same again, again

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HOSTILE WATERS



The year is 2032. Twenty years have passed since the Great Wars ended.
Somewhere in the depths of the Pacific ocean, a dark cabal prepares for battle.

Your only option is to relearn war.

Revive the last of the adaptive cruisers.

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Only then will you have the ability to lend battle vehicles autonomous control.
Only then will you have the power to take on the might of the cabal.

These are Hostile Waters...

Rage

www.rage.com

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PIZZA CONNECTION 2

£29.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out now

More mighty meaty than quattro formaggio, **Paul Presley** orders in

The focus on pizzas in Software 2000's follow-up to a game no one has ever heard of is somewhat misleading. You start by opening a humble pizza parlour, hiring your staff and stocking up on ingredients, and quickly have to work your way towards a burgeoning pizza empire.

Whether you go the cheap and cheerful Pizza Hut route or tread the higher class Ask Pizza road is up to you. What's less in doubt is that as you grow, you'll need to start taking a pro-active approach to eliminating your competition.

The food management business sim is actually just a means to an end, a way of getting from a low-rent version of *SimCity* to a low-rent version of *Gangsters*. Unfortunately, while the earlier stages of the game hint at a much larger underworld of crime, corruption and *Soprano*-

style mob activity, by the time you've taken your first steps into the dark underbelly of society you quickly realise there's not that much to it.

Which is annoying, as with a touch more variety and a larger sense of scope *Pizza Connection 2* would have been a tasty little number indeed. There's nothing fundamentally wrong with any of it, other than the fact that it's not going to retain your interest for too long.

The pizza editor is quite fun (especially with some of the more unorthodox ingredients on offer – snake topping, anyone?), and technically the whole game is very solid (despite a few odd transitory offerings here and there). But there's no sense of ambition. It's a stop-gap. Too limited in the long run. When placed next to the games industry's gourmet meals such

as *Black & White*, *Republic: The Revolution* or any of the *Sim* series of titles, *Pizza Connection 2* is little more than the disposable fast food it bases itself around.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 266 Memory 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** A PII350 works fine and the more memory the better

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Competent • The pizza creator is fun
DOWNERS Too little to do in the long run • A general lack of ambition all round

65 Could do with better toppings



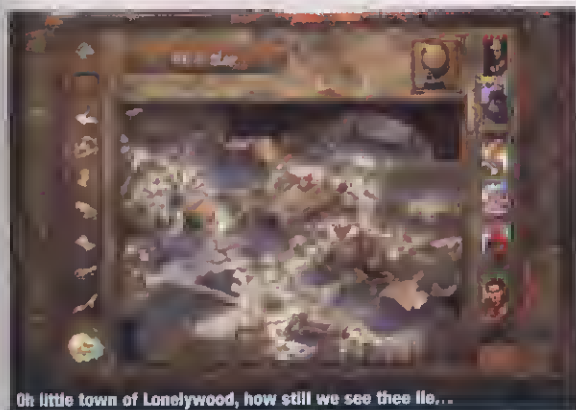
Mmm, tasty.



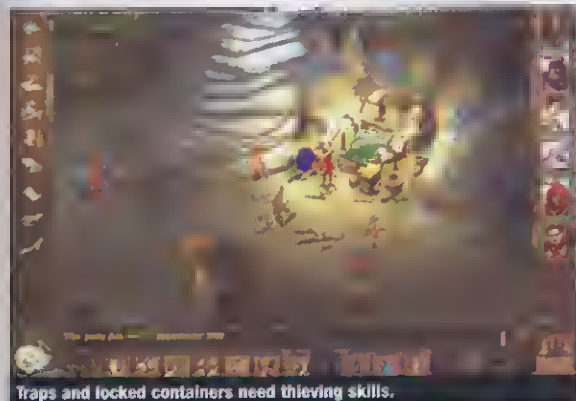
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ICEWIND DALE: HEART OF WINTER

£19.99 • Interplay • Out now



Oh little town of Lonelywood, how still we see thee lie...



Traps and locked containers need thieving skills.

Ice Man **Andrew Wright** checks out the new add-on pack for *Icewind Dale*

Heart Of Winter is an expansion pack for Black Isle's Dungeons and Dragons-based RPG romp, *Icewind Dale*, and it takes over where the latter left off, giving your by-now well-experienced *Icewind Dale* characters a whole new adventure to complete.

If you haven't completed *IWD*, you can still install the add-on and start the *Heart Of Winter* quest at any point during the main game, although it is designed for characters that are at least ninth level. You can also start the quest from scratch as a standalone game using imported characters or new ones.

HOW doesn't really blend in with the original, but it does offer more magic spells and items, more threatening monsters, new items and six new areas to explore, starting with the town of Lonelywood. The *HOW* expansion pack also upgrades the original game's graphics to support 800x600 resolution – even higher if your graphics card is good

enough – and the same OpenGL support and texture rendering introduced in *Baldur's Gate II*. You can also clear away menus and there is an added hotkey to highlight items on the ground.

New lands include a barbarian encampment and a burial ground protected by some horrific undead such as drowned dead, barrow wights, ghost shamans and wailing virgins. Among the 60 new spells are the cleric's highly effective combat spell, Blade Barrier, and the mage's protection spell, known as Seven Eyes. Powerful new weapons are also added, including a surprisingly meaty +5 club, powerful swords and new armour and shields.

HOW is no *BGI* upgrade though – it doesn't have alternate character-class kits like the berserker and kensai variants, and it doesn't allow your character to use two weapons at once. However, druids and bards have been strengthened and there are one or two useful

additions. £20 might be a lot to fork out for a few days of added play, but fans of the original will undoubtedly want it.

If you missed the original, you can get both *IWD* and *HOW* together for £29.99.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 233MHz, Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** DirectX-compatible 4Mb video card, CD-Rom drive **WE SAY** Good enough but we recommend a 16Mb graphics card for higher resolutions

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS More spells, items and monsters • Improved graphical resolution • New hotkeys
DOWNERS No alternate character-class kits • Shortlived

72 It'll while away a few long winter nights

WOODY WOODPECKER RACING

★ £24.99 • Konami • Out now

A trip down memory lane for Paul Presley turns into a real nightmare

Now, I may just be misremembering my youth – all those wasted years sitting in front of children's telly, from *Dangermouse* to *Dogtanian*, from *Maggie* to *Metal Mickey* – but Woody Woodpecker was crap, wasn't he? Okay, the oft-repeated signature laugh was OK but he was always one of the second-rate cartoon stars. He may have kept America smiling during the misery of World War II, but he'd have been eaten alive had he ever strayed into Looney Toon territory. And does anyone actually remember anything about the cartoons themselves? Hardly a memorable supporting cast – Wally Walrus, Knothead, Buzz Buzzard? I might as well be reading a list of shadow cabinet members for all the familiarity those names will bring.

Anyway, all you need to know is that *Woody Woodpecker Racing*

is a cheap and not-so-cheerful *Mario Kart* knock-off that is no more deserving of your valuable drinking time than Jim Davidson is deserving of a prime-time television show on a major national network. Sloppy handling and controls, lacklustre visuals and audio effects, and about as much long-term appeal as a night in bed with Bernard Manning.

It's not even as though Konami has understood the licence it's got. The game is so obviously pitched towards the children's market that it might as well come with a free lollipop or *Pokémon* card. But the game is so badly designed and the vehicles handle so poorly that kids will lose interest approximately seven seconds after the first race finishes. Besides which, they won't even know who the flying-duck Woody Woodpecker is. The only people who remember him

are sad twats like me – in our late 20s/early 30s. And we've even less interest in playing a kiddie racer than the sprogs.

One to avoid. One to seriously avoid. It'll only make you angry if you don't.

TECH SPECS

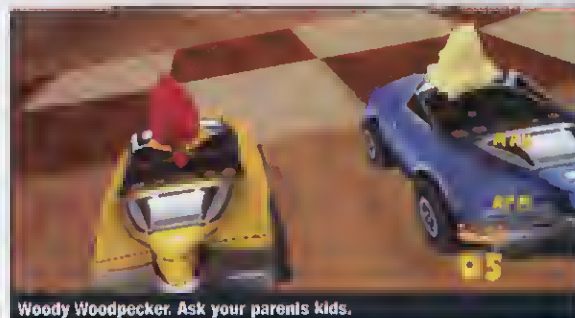
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** It's not exactly state of the art

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Won't start any international conflicts

⬇ **DOWNERS** May cause families to break up if bought as a present for the kids

27 Another childhood memory prostituted



Woody Woodpecker. Ask your parents kids.



Top pecking action.



Drilling all over the world.



In Tokyo with just under \$5m to spend. I'm gonna have me some fun.

OIL TYCOON

★ £24.99 • Blackstar Interactive • Out May 4

Martin Korda gets oiled up

Oil Tycoon is a management game that promises very little and delivers even less. Somewhat unsurprisingly, it's your job to become the head of an oil company and make it the most successful in the world.

Joining the likes of *Pizza Tycoon*, *Airline Tycoon*, *Mouse Mat Magnate* and all the other identical and turgid *Tycoon* games out there, *Oil Tycoon* fails with some aplomb to take the genre anywhere new, different or vaguely interesting.

It's great to see that the developers have tried to get some animation into the game, as most games in this genre are just a collection of static screens. However, don't get too excited – the graphical quality rarely rises above that of a text adventure.

That's not to say that *OT* is without merit though. You can play either in real-time or turn-based modes, which should suit a

wide range of wannabe oil barons. You can even play with five other human players, if you can actually find that many people willing to endure it.

OT also has an excellent research tree, which slowly opens up new ways of extracting, collecting and transporting your supplies. In real-time mode though, it takes so long to research anything that you may be tempted to take out your boredom on the CD with a hammer.

However, once you manage to set up a few sites and get a licence to drill, *OT* can become quite entertaining. Your primary goal is to get your company on the Stock Exchange, making sure that your shares are worth a fair whack when you float. After you've done this, repetition flashes its spotty arse, and interest consequently wanes.

While it's not catastrophic by any means, *Oil Tycoon* looks as

though it was rushed; not an easy thing to achieve with a game of this ilk. As a result, only those with an unhealthy affinity with oil and management sims should even consider forking out for it.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII 300, 64Mb RAM

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Good research tree • Briefly entertaining

⬇ **DOWNERS** No different from any other management game • Dreadful graphics • Too slow to get going in real-time mode • Encourages boredom

33 All dried up

TIMES OF CONFLICT

★ £29.99 • Microdots • Out now

Time for a ruck? Martin Korda's your man

PCZONE PANTS Allow me to introduce you to the three child prodigies behind *Times Of Conflict*, Pee wee La Rue, Olivier Pisseys and Fredrick Ou Chien. Between them, they've been really clever and made a futuristic 3D RTS game all by themselves.

Pee wee was in charge of graphics. Despite his chubby unco-ordinated fingers, he's managed to draw some wonderful – if slightly smudged – visuals with an assortment of wax crayons, so good in fact that his mum and dad saw fit to stick some of them on their fridge. Obviously they're very proud of their son, who – claims his primary school teacher – is showing the drawing skills of a six year old even though he's only three and a half.

Olivier, bright lad that he is, was voted in as head of AI. And what a great job he's done. He

claims that he based *TOC's* AI on the tactics employed by his school's under-fives football team, and it's easy to see the similarity. Foot-based units charge towards a central point en masse, and then start to shoot in every direction other than the one they're supposed to. Meanwhile, the larger units do exactly the reverse of what you tell them, usually by heading off in the wrong direction or not moving at all.

Finally there's the genius that is Fredrick, who was given the task of coming up with a storyline. And considering that he had little more than a stack of sci-fi comic books to copy his ideas from, the young lad's surpassed himself. Three warring nations go about killing each other. But then they discover that a greater evil threatens their world. I won't spoil it for you by telling you what happens next. What I will tell you is that Fredrick's story was

so good it won him a £5 Waterstones voucher in a local under-nine's story competition.

Now I won't insult you by explaining that these three kids didn't actually make this game. But let's just say they may as well have done. I think you catch my drift.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PII 300, 128 Mb
RAM, 12Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

- ⊕ **UPPERS** You can play as one of three sides
- ⊖ **DOWNERS** Not enough room to list them all

12 Not worthy to stick in your bin, let alone on your HD



And if you ever get pissed before marking out our football pitch again...



Jon's barbecue ended abruptly when fights broke out over the last sausage.



Break someone out of this prison to make progress.



The cops catch you robbing the local pharmacy.

HEIST

★ £29.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out now

Steve Hill was once arrested for stealing a suitcase. Playing this was even less fun

Why have you never heard of this game? Because it's rubbish, clearly. If *Heist* was a film it would be made for television and broadcast on a regional channel at 1.40am. It would also be preceded by a warning that it contains strong language from the outset. Of course, that doesn't make it a good game, it simply makes it a bad game in which you are regularly accused of having sexual intercourse with your mother.



A lowly trailer park provides easy pickings.

So what's the big idea? With a story worthy of *Renegade*, you are sprung from a Nevada jail, transported to a backwater town and told to await further instructions. These come via a call to a local phone box, whereby the 'mysterious' Colonel explains that you have to get a crew together and do a number of jobs.

The seeds of an average idea are in place, and in some ways it's a criminal version of the 1998 hit *Commandos*, also employing a similar graphical style. However, unlike that game, *Heist* is designed in such a cack-handed fashion as to make it at best really annoying, at worst unplayable.

Initially bewildering, countless perusals of the manual reveal a painful interface via which you "case joints" before heisting them, a clumsy process that mainly involves looking at slow-

moving progress bars. Gradually bigger and more lucrative jobs follow, taking you on a fascinating voyage through the American underworld. Except it's muck.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PII 300, 128Mb
RAM, 12Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

- ⊕ **UPPERS** Foul and abusive language
- No 3D card required
- ⊖ **DOWNERS** Irritating interface • Laborious gameplay • Tedious progress bars • Cheesy voice acting

25 Not worth stealing

ADVENTURE PINBALL: FORGOTTEN ISLAND

★ £19.99 • EA • Out now

Martin Korda went to an island once, but he can't remember what it was called

Take one slightly tilted table, throw in some metal balls, a few rebound pads, and a couple of magnets, and you're left with just about every pinball game ever made. However, in *Adventure Pinball: Forgotten Island*, we've got somewhat of a variation on this overused theme.

The game is based on a mysterious island, full of wondrous creatures and ancient tribes. However, they're all about to be wiped out by some disaster, because the Island's Guardian Statue has lost her enchanted eyes. In short, some marble blint has gone and had her eyes pecked out, so you have to travel halfway across the globe to a mosquito infested island, which is made up of nine giant pinball tables, in order to save a bunch of dinosaurs and some illiterate cannibals. Sounds like fun.

And strangely enough, it's pretty entertaining. Each table

is based on a different section of the island, providing plenty of diversity both visually and in terms of gameplay. *Adventure Pinball* also makes good use of its 3D engine, interspersing the high-speed gameplay with visually pleasing cut scenes. Shame about the monkey impression sound effects though, which sound more like a constipated geriatric trying to take a dump than a banana-munching primate.

As you'd expect from any pinball game, there are loads of bonuses to be discovered and masses of sub-tables to ping your iron balls into. However, no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't activate any multi-ball bonuses, leading us to believe that there aren't any. Then again, it would probably be impossible to play with more than one ball at a time, what with all of the sub-tables.

Adventure Pinball: Forgotten Island is one of the most original pinball games we've ever seen. While it's hardly born of genius (in fact it's more likely to have been born of hallucinogenic drugs going by the storyline), it's different enough to warrant your interest.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
3D card **WE SAY** PII 400, 64Mb RAM,
12Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Original • Decent 3D engine • Plenty of sub-tables and bonuses to discover • Nine tables
DOWNERS Not for pinball purists • Lacks lasting appeal • Some poor sound effects

59 It's no balls-up



So that's what was causing the ripples on my coffee.



Looks like this table's got a bit of an insect problem.

PACMAN ADVENTURES IN TIME

★ £19.99 • Hasbro • Out now

Rhianna Pratchett isn't over the moon that Pac is back

It hasn't been an easy life for Pac Man. Born in 1980 of a Japanese father Pac Man, Pac's childhood was tormented by ghosts that doggedly pursued him wherever he went. He was forced into an arranged marriage with Ms Pac Man barely a year later, a fast moving chick who knew how to accessorise (lest we forget that bow).

Pac was used and abused at every opportunity, baring countless offspring and enduring the humiliation of his own cartoon show and pinball game. And now at last, when he thought he was destined for that golden maze in the sky, Pac suffers the ultimate indignity, a 3D Pac Man game. The poor little guy.

Whether or not you like this latest *Pacman* incarnation will depend on how much you liked the multitude of *Pacman* spin-offs. In fact it's not the first time Pac has taken tentative steps towards 3D. In 1988 there was *Pac Mania* which used a 3D isometric interface to imprison the Yellow One in a maze so big the screen had to scroll to follow him around.

Adventures In Time turns Pac into a cute, chubby, and overly smiley creature who makes a sound like someone rubbing a balloon against their teeth whenever he eats a pill. On the whole, the mazes are very challenging, especially towards the end of the levels, even on easy mode. You're also given the opportunity

to save frequently, which makes the levels a lot less tedious. Unfortunately they are perpetually interrupted by dumb little games, usually involving running very fast, and eating pills while some cutesy alligator or cannibal runs after you. I'm a Pac Purist and proud of it. *Adventures In Time* is just wrong.



One of the trickier mazes.



Oh for goodness sake give me a railgun.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Works better with a P450

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Challenging mazes • Easy to save games
DOWNERS Annoying • Cutesy and blocky graphics • Daft mini games

60 It's Pacman but not as we know him

EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON



NOTHING STANDS IN ITS WAY



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excessive
force



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#2 MAY 2001

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

BATTLE ISLE: DARKSPACE

We beta test the latest in the long-running Battle Isle series

PLAYING
ONLINE **PART 2**
HOW TO JOIN
THE ONLINE GAMING
REVOLUTION

REVIEWED

E-RACER

We take Hage's online racer for a spin

REVEALED

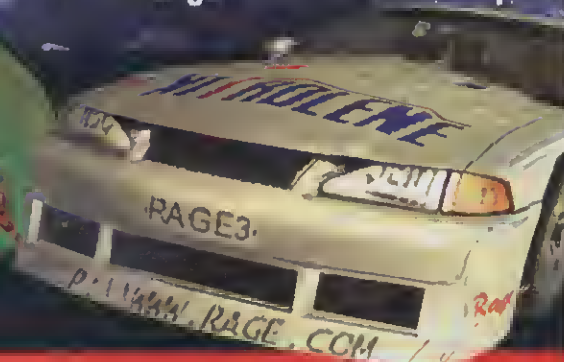
EARTH AND BEYOND

Westwood's online space sim

REVIEWED

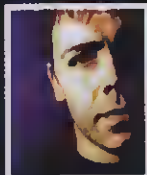
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BEYOND THE FRONTIER



So, Westwood has finally announced its latest game, *Earth And Beyond*. It isn't based in the *Command & Conquer* universe, neither is it a strategy title. Indeed, horror of horrors, it's a space combat and trading game, but then you knew that. So why, with the entire *C&C* and *Red Alert* universe at their feet, not to mention *Dune* and *Lands Of*

Lore, did one of the world's biggest developers decide to take to the stars? Space 'sims' are hardly what you'd call popular; *StarLancer*, *FreeSpace 2*, *Klingon Academy* – three of the latest additions to the genre, all bombed in the charts. Has Westwood gone utterly mad?

Well, on closer inspection, space combat games are perfectly suited to online play. Compared to first-person action games and RPGs, the furniture of space-based games is almost nonexistent. The graphical demands are few, with just starry backdrops and a few planets milling about, around which low-polygon ships can flit in huge numbers. You can stick literally hundreds of ships around a planet and your PC will have no problems keeping up.

But the best thing about space combat games, especially in relation to online gaming, is that games such as *Jumpgate* and *Earth And Beyond* will offer rich role-playing opportunities, as good as in *EverQuest*, with the added bonus of relentless action if you desire it. You can trade with other players, form pirate squads and hopefully one day, run entire corporations and let others work for you.

So, another online space combat game? The more the merrier.

Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

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HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main PC ZONE reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.

VERDICT

★★★★★ Excellent
★★★★ Very good
★★★ Decent
★★ Not bad
★ Bad



Upgrades on your ship will indicate how advanced your character is.



Earth And Beyond will have literally thousands of planets for you to explore.

EARTH

Westwood's new online game unveiled at last.


Martin Korda pulls back the sheets

If nothing else Westwood does a frustratingly good job at keeping a lid on what it is up to. For four years we've been told *Earth And Beyond* has been in development and when it announced that an online game was soon to be released, we weren't alone in thinking that it would be an online, persistent-world version of *Command & Conquer*.

But then it's understandable that Westwood (www.westwood.com) wanted to keep things quiet for a while. Its first online game, *C&C: Sole Survivor*, was something of a dud, and we can be thankful it never found its way to these shores. In contrast, *Earth And Beyond* should go some way to erasing that bad memory. As well as being 3D,

it marks a step in a new direction for the Vegas-based über-coders – space combat, or in the words of the press release, 'a persistent-state galaxy game.' (A bit like *EverQuest* in space then? – Ed)

Though billed as the first ever online space-based RPG, reading between the lines *E&B* sounds incredibly similar to a dozen other *Elite*-inspired online games making their way to our screens, from *Jumpgate* to *X-Online*. But whereas the success of *Jumpgate* is far from assured, the fact that *E&B* will have Westwood's name on the box surely means that thousands will buy it and in turn, many more people will join this rapidly accelerating bandwagon. With Westwood committed, online games are poised



You'll be able to play as one of three races and choose from three professions.

AND BEYOND

to acquire more mainstream acceptance, if any were needed.

Inquisitive as ever, we wanted to know what features would make us sit up and take a genuine interest. After all, Westwood's name may guarantee sales, but it doesn't assure quality. So we grilled game producer Eric Wang about some specifics, and he managed to lay down a pretty convincing argument as to why we should all be getting excited about this project.

Earth And Beyond will of course feature the usual mix of exploration, interaction, trading and combat. However, rather than making you play as a predefined character, you'll be able to create your own, choosing from three races and three professions, the latter of which will have an impressive nine variants. Each of the three races will excel in a particular field. So, if you're a

Terran, you'll have an edge when it comes to trading, while playing as a Progen will boost your combat skills. The final race, the Jenquai, will give you an advantage in the exploration department.

However, there wouldn't be much point to a persistent online universe without quests and experience points. So it's just as

“E&B's unique mission generator will assess your abilities and create a series of missions to suit you”

well that that *E&B* will have a unique mission generator, which will assess your ability, race and profession and create a series of missions to best suit you.


If you successfully complete your tasks, you'll be given cash rewards—the game's equivalent of experience points. These allow you to buy upgrades for your ship. As

Eric explains: “The ship will grow and change with the character and become a visual representation of how advanced the player is in the game.” For the more casual online gamer, it will come as good news that you won't lose any of your ship's hardware when you die. Instead you'll just incur an experience points penalty, which

you'll have to work off by completing a certain number of tasks. With literally thousands of planets to explore and with an intuitive mission generator, *E&B* is looking set to be one of the most open-ended, replayable and accessible online games ever.

But that's not to say there won't be room for storylines. Rather than

sticking to one restrictive and predefined script, Westwood is putting in many different ones for you to discover. Eric claims that “Westwood will be continuously adding content—new areas to explore, new storylines to follow.” Less hardcore players will be able to keep up with events through news reports, which will be available at every Star Base. It'll certainly be a breath of fresh air to get away from the turgid scenarios (war with aliens, revenge for a slain loved one) adopted by so many (single-player) space combat games.

With an expected release date of winter this year, there's still some time to go before we see the finished product. However, it's already apparent that *E&B* will not only be entertaining and immersive, but a game that may well open persistent online universe gaming to the masses. 

LINKS

ASHERON'S CALL II



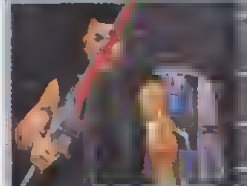
Turbine Entertainment (www.turbinegames.com) has confirmed that work is well underway on *Asheron's Call II* – the sequel to Microsoft's successful online role-playing game, as we hinted at last issue. A new 3D game engine – Turbine Engine 2.0, was unveiled at the recent Game Developers Conference, although details of the game itself and when it might arrive are still shrouded in secrecy.

HIGHLANDER ONLINE OFF?



Though there have been a few reports that French outfit Kalisto (www.kalisto.com) has put its *Highlander Online* project on hold, we've since had confirmation that the game is still in production (even though the company is seemingly on the verge of bankruptcy), and on course for release sometime next year. Unfortunately, there are no new details on the game, which to add to what we already know, adds up to not much as all. Don't hold your breath.

PROJECT ENTROPIA



Beta testing is underway for Mindark's online action RPG *Project Entropia*, so if you fancy joining in before the masses have to pay, scoot along to www.project-entropia.com sharpish.

STARKNIGHTS



Nearing completion is the online space strategy *Starknights*, a game that allows you to play against both AI opponents and real players. After a successful beta test period, developer KnightSoft is hoping publishers will take an interest. Download the demo from www.starknights.com.

DREADNOUGHTS

It's a bit like *Tribes 2* if you must know

Though there are no details of a release date, *Dreadnoughts* from Xenopi Studios (www.xenopi.com) looks like a game that could be well worth waiting for.

The aim, as the crew of a hovering dreadnought, is simply to destroy the opposing team's ship, and like *Tribes 2* the game will be set across huge outdoor maps, in various buildings and even the ships themselves. First-person

action is the order of the day and like Sierra's soon-to-be-released multiplayer epic, players will be able to strap on jetpacks, fly smaller craft and take control of weapon turrets in a bid to eliminate the opposition.

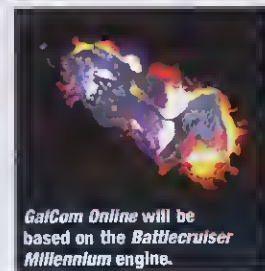
What makes *Dreadnoughts* stand out, however, is that players will be able to pick specialist skills, from sniper to engineer, all the way to commanding and directing the team from the bridge of the Dreadnought

itself. Real-time voice communication is planned, so too is a voting system to get rid of those useless Commanders. What seems a little odd for such an ambitious game, however, is that it is being designed to support teams of only eight players. Hopefully the developers will see fit to expand the player limit and, considering that the project is only a few months into development, we can expect many more changes in the coming months.



GALACTIC COMMAND ONLINE

Online *Battlecruiser* sequel in the works



GalCom Online will be based on the *Battlecruiser Millennium* engine.



Next month we'll be talking with Derek Smart, creator of the *Battlecruiser* series.

Perhaps the most ambitious single-player game in existence (*Black & White* notwithstanding) is soon to spawn a full online-only sequel in *Galactic Command Online*, the natural successor to the nearly complete *Battlecruiser Millennium*.

As in *Battlecruiser*, *GalCom Online* will allow players to fight across entire galaxies, piloting massive starships, zooming about in fighter craft and travelling across planetary surfaces – either on foot or in vehicles. The game won't just be about combat however, as to increase your standing you'll have to complete missions, trade and strike up deals with all manner of political groups. Release isn't slated until well into next year, but you can keep up to speed by visiting www.3000ad.com

BARRY'S BOUTIQUE

EB swoop to save beleaguered games portal Barrysworld

Though in liquidation and out of action since early February, it seems we were a little hasty in announcing the death of Europe's premier games portal Barrysworld (www.barrysworld.com) last issue. Just recently, High Street games store Electronics Boutique bought the ailing online giant for a cool £400,000 and for the moment at least, Barrysworld is back.

But changes are on the way. Barrysworld will have to make money, and having failed to do so through advertising alone, will surely have to start charging those who play on its servers. EB spokesperson Jo Taylor says it is too early to announce future plans: "At this time all I can say is that it's business as usual and that our strategy will become clear over a period of time."

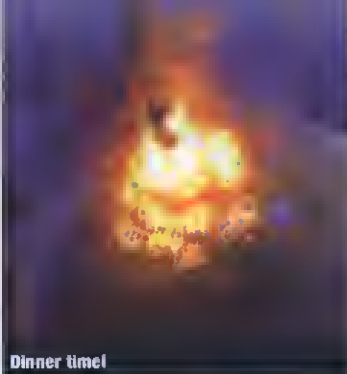


Barry's back, but there'll be changes ahead.



Amazing what these chefs can do with a crab claw.

Upgrade your ships with new weaponry.



Dinner time!



The interface is far from complete.

WORLD EATER

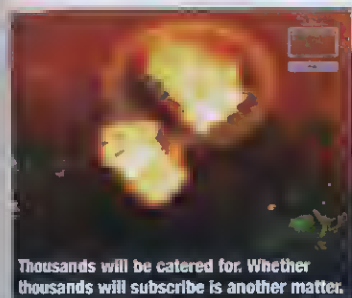
When a Mars bar just won't do, Gatorhole serves up the whole planet

Empire-building games, like the classic *Master Of Orion* series, have been something of a rarity in recent years. Considering how undemanding they are in comparison to more graphically rich games, it's a wonder we have yet to see a comprehensive online equivalent, apart from a few browser-based games like *Planetarion* (www.planetarion.com).

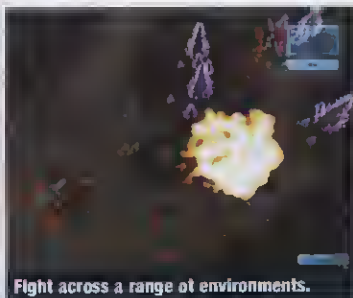
World Eater from Swedish developer Gatorhole looks to change all that. Similar in its mechanics to the ageing *MOO* - to which a sequel will eventually appear - *World Eater* will combine research, resource management, exploration, diplomacy and combat. In a unique twist, rather than guide the human race to achieve galactic supremacy, the aim is to

enslave them and set them to work mining resources to feed your fleet of 'spacecraft'. The more resources you feed to your ships, the bigger and more destructive they become, until they are the size of small planets and can literally eat their way through worlds, hence the name *World Eater*.

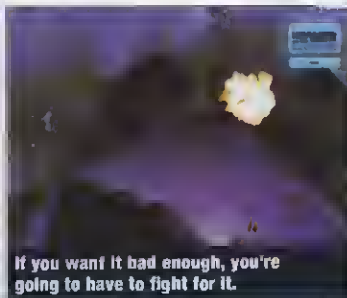
It certainly is a novel idea, reminiscent in fact of the old *Star Trek* episode *The Doomsday Machine* in which Kirk and co must stop a planet-eating machine munching its way across space. Hopefully the small team will be able to carry through their ideas, and with hundreds of players able to play in a single game, we have high hopes for it. You can find out more by taking a trip to gatorhole.com/world eater



Thousands will be catered for. Whether thousands will subscribe is another matter.



Fight across a range of environments.



If you want it bad enough, you're going to have to fight for it.

TRADE WARS: DARK MILLENNIUM

Another massive online space trading game appears on the sensors

As with the 2000AD comic, Arthur C Clarke's 2001: *A Space Odyssey* and now the old online game *Trade Wars 2002*, the date seems to be catching up with science fiction, and in the case of the latter, an update would seem to be in order.

Not that we can pretend to have played *Trade Wars 2002*, nor to have heard of it, but

it seems Realm Interactive is keen to update the old BBS game and bring it kicking and screaming into the 21st century in the form of *Trade Wars: Dark Millennium*, due for release early next year.

As you would imagine, trade seems to be the cornerstone of the game, as players head up intergalactic corporations and try

to steal the edge from their competitors by setting up trade routes, ferrying resources and hopefully bringing in a wad of cash.

The game will also include a wealth of combat options, from simple acts of piracy to skirmishes between dozens of units, both in space and on planet surfaces. Find out more from www.tradewars.com.

LINKS

ER-SIM



If you fancy delving around the innards of a human abdomen, *ER-Sim* could be the game for you. Likened to an online version of battery-operated kid's game *Operation*, minus the tweezers, the game aims to be a simulation of emergency room action. In beta at the moment, there are a few test cases for people to play through, though we were bored to tears. Those with more patience (wah-hey) might like to make an appointment at www.ersim.com.

DBA ONLINE



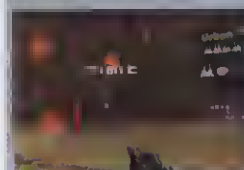
ZONE's own hardcore wargamer Andrew Wright recently came across a play-by-email wargame going by the name of *De Bellis Antiquitatis*, which to most gamers will be about as playable as it is pronounceable. In essence it is the online equivalent of having grown men shuffling lead soldiers across a sandpit. Head to www.dbaol.com to find out more.

ULTIMA ONLINE



Those of you hoping for a full review of *Ultima Online: Third Dawn* will have to wait until next month. We were sent a 'review' disc, but on playing the game found much of the content has yet to be incorporated.

BLOODMONEY



Already you can earn thousands from playing *Quake III Arena*, but you have to be more than a bit special to earn a decent living. So, why not try online shooter *Urban Mercenary* (www.urbanmercenary.com), where you can earn money from other players by killing them in the game. Check out www.bloodmoney.org for more info.

PLAYING



Last issue, we covered ways of connecting to the Internet. Now that you're tooled up with a cable modem or ADSL account, *Phil Wand* takes a look at what you can actually do to entertain yourself online

Last month, we finished off by briefly showing you how to power up your copy of *Quake*, point it in the direction of a server and jump headfirst into fragiland. What we didn't explain was why, after you'd managed to complete the single-player section of the game without dying, you were so damned hopeless against real people.

Well, don't get disheartened. Perhaps it wasn't your fault. Playing games online, especially a first-person shooter (FPS)

such as *Quake III: Arena*, *Half-Life* or *Unreal Tournament* takes some getting used to and a lot of practice. If you were playing over a humble modem, you may have noticed your opponents disappearing from your sights, only to reappear seconds later on the other side of the map. This, dear reader, is commonly known as lag, and to explain what it is, how it is measured and how to reduce it, we first have to clarify a few things.

First, the machine you connect to when you join an online game is known as the server or host. Its duty in life

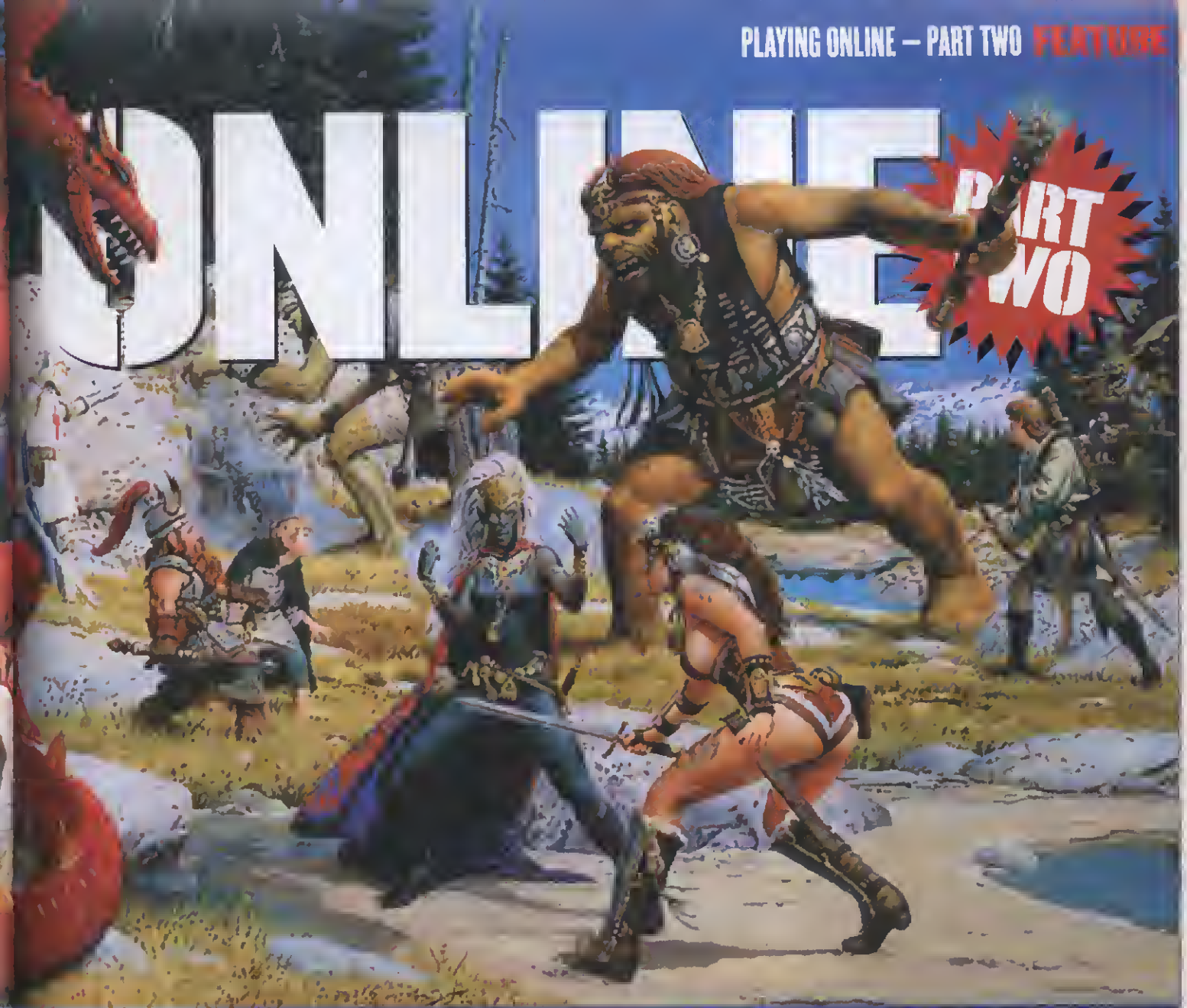
is to take data sent over the Internet from your machine, use it to translate your actions and movements, and then let everyone else connected to it — the other people playing the game — know what you're up to. So when you take one pace forward, crouch, jump or fire your gun, everyone else sees that, too. Your machine is known as the client, and like the server, it both sends and receives a stream of data that is constantly being generated and interpreted by the game software.

THE TIME IT TAKES FOR DATA TO TRAVEL

The time it takes for data to be sent from your machine out to the server and back again is known as ping, and is measured in milliseconds (ms). The power of your hardware and the speed of

your Internet connection determine how quickly the round-trip takes. If your dial-up is dropping packets — bits of information sent from the server — or the server itself is under excessive load and is not sending the packets in the first place, the game starts to stutter and you experience something known as lag.

Now, there will always be some form of time delay between you and the host — nothing happens in an instant — and game software has been designed to compensate for this fact. But when it creeps above a certain point, it becomes obvious to the player and makes smooth gameplay almost impossible. Why? Because when you aim at a target and press the fire button, if you have a 500ms ping, you're actually shooting



It was there almost certainly on. With a 100ms, or even a 300ms ping you can learn to compensate for the deferral of data, but at 400ms you're really doing things.

Although virtually all online multiplayer games require a client and server, not all depend on you having an Internet connection. In the martial arts.

First-person action games, by their very nature, mean a low ping is an absolute must, but then there are many gamers with pings of 200ms or more who can regularly beat those with a ping under 50ms. As we said, it just takes some getting used to.

Strategy games have no such restrictions, as the

amount of data flying to and from is significantly less, and especially so in turn-based games such as *Civilization*. Here, the only person likely to become annoyed is your opponent if you take hours deciding what you are going to do during your turn. The

No matter what games you choose to play online, there is a code of conduct that binds them all together, especially in first-person action games

rule goes that, the faster the reactions required, the lower ping you'll want. Under 200ms for FPS games and online role-playing games (RPGs) such as *EverQuest*, and under 400ms for real-time strategy (RTS) games such as *Red Alert 2*.

Thankfully, not all multiplayer games require

you to be online while you're playing them. Persistent state worlds, often RPGs, keep going without you being there. When it's 3am and your eyelids have started sagging around your cheeks, you can send your character to a tavern and bed down for

as long as you happen to be away. And while you're asleep, the virtual world keeps turning: arguments are had, battles are fought, people are killed. The fact that you're no longer there doesn't mean everything else stops. For many, that's the excitement of it all, because in that respect it's just like real life.

HOW TO GET STARTED

To play online, you don't have to have to visit the High Street and hand over your hard-earned for a shrink-wrapped box. There are countless alternatives, many of them free and easy to install. The most common of these is the browser-based game - one that you play by visiting a website with Internet Explorer.

The beauty of this is that there's no software to install, no configuration, and no specific hardware requirements; if your browser works, the game will work. Simply point and click as you would point and click at a website. Examples of browser-based games include the hugely popular *Planetarian* at www.planetarian.com. Check 

← the Electric Games directory at www.electricgames.com/online.html for a listing that will keep you entertained for months.

Massively multiplayer, online role-playing games, more commonly known as MMORPGs, are the oldest online games around, and have been drawing crowds since Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs) took the concept of *Dungeons & Dragons* online. Essentially, they put thousands of people together within the same fantasy world, and allow them to act how they please within a very loose set of rules. The most obvious examples of MMORPGs are *EverQuest* at www.everquest.com, *Ultima Online* at www.uo.com, and *Asheron's Call* at www.asheroncall.com.

If you're so inclined, there are hundreds of text-based MUDs still being played today - see The Mud Connector at www.mudconnector.com for a full listing - as well as countless Play By E-Mail games, which work on the same principal as a client/server game, but with the instructions sent to the host by email. See www.pbem.com for more details.

Last, but by no means least, there are the hundreds, if not thousands, of modifications available for existing games, almost all of them free to download from the web. Famous mods include *Team Fortress Classic*, *Strike Force*, *Day Of Defeat* and, of course, *Counter-Strike*. These simply take the heart and soul of an existing game - in the case of CS, it's *Half-Life* - and bend the original code to make it appear as though you're playing a new game. And in almost every respect, you are - from the weapons to the maps, everything gets changed. For the definitive list of *Half-Life* mods, you can either visit the Custom Game menu entry within *Half-Life* itself and then press the Update button, or bookmark half-life.pcgames.com/mods.

But look, let's face facts now: not everything is free. Our reckoning is that pretty soon most things you do on the Internet will be pay per

play. As the likes of Barry'sWorld have shown, it doesn't make commercial sense to spend day and night developing top-quality software and online entertainment and then give your work away.

Games like *EverQuest*, *Ultima Online* and *Asheron's Call* cost money to buy and subscribe to. But they're not owned by greedy individuals desperate to retire to a villa in Tuscany, but by businesses and service

far larger than the cost.

INTERVIEW WITH... JAMES

No matter what games you choose to play online, there is a code of conduct that binds them all together, especially when it comes to first-person action games. Behave properly and you'll find yourself with a whole load of new friends. Act like a moron and you'll be shunned like a leper.

You'll quickly find that, when playing games in cyberspace, there are

numerous things you should and should not do. Most of your learning here will be through trial and error, as protocol varies from game to game, but there are a number of despicable practices common to everyone's favourite Internet genre - the first-person shooter - that you should shy away from at all costs.

You've probably heard the term camping before, as it's the number one gripe from FPS gamers. It refers to the way players 'set up camp' in certain areas of the map, often near respawn rooms or in dark corners where they can crouch down and pick off hapless souls who walk past unawares. Although camping is a rather substandard tactic, giving the perpetrator little in the way of a scoreboard advantage, it is something everyone does from time to time. If you're playing *Counter-Strike*, for example, the terrorist team often digs itself in back at base in readiness for an attack by the counter-terrorists. That's not camping; that's playing the game.

Spamming is when a player or team of players use



Sony's forthcoming massively multiplayer FPS, *Planetside*.



All the fun of warfare online.

providers who need to keep servers running, maintain hardware, pay developers and constantly update their online worlds with all manner of improvements and enhancements. And the only way they can do that is by charging people to use them - the going rate at the moment being around 10 bucks a month. Often you'll get a discount for paying for six months up front, so if you find a game you like and think you're going to stick at, our advice is to pay in six-monthly chunks. In short, don't be put off by games that cost you. In almost all cases, the reward is

GAMESPEAK

ONLINE JARGON

Messaging in the heat of battle has a shorthand all its own

Once you've connected and your opponents are using you for target practice, you'll probably notice a steady stream of nonsense scrolling across the screen. Look closer and you'll recognise the odd word - perhaps the odd sentence. Yes, game players are notorious chatterboxes, and what you're witnessing is the in-game talk. Here we list some common abbreviations and phrases so you can not only understand what's going on but also join in.

Abbreviation Meaning

HPB High Ping Bastard (ping above 350)

LPB Low Ping Bastard (ping below 100)

gl Good luck

n No, negative

k Yes, okay, affirmative

np No problem

tvm Thanks very much

O Offence, ie attacking the enemy

D Defence, ie guarding base

PK Player kill (common to RPG)

tk Team kill (commonly to FPS)

kick Remove from the game (by an administrator)

ban Ban from the server (by an administrator)

wtf What the f@&?

gg Good game

cg Crap game

rofl Rolls on the floor laughing

lol Laughs out loud

lmao Laughing my arse off

nme Enemy

omg Oh my God...

ns Nice shot

gtg Got to go

newbie Someone obviously new to the game

flama Someone playing deliberately badly

excessive munitions to prevent enemy troops from advancing, or more commonly to disguise a general lack of skill. It involves throwing a large number of grenades into a confined area, or holding your finger on the trigger and hosing down a portion of the map in the hope that, sooner or later, someone will stray into your line of fire. Spamming can also refer to the way some players repeatedly send copies of chat messages to everyone in the game.

Although cheaters have always been around in almost every game ever published, online games are an obvious target for tricksters

Also known as TK'ers, team killers are the people who, either deliberately or by accident, shoot, wound and kill their own team mates. In *Half-Life*-based games you can see team kills by a bright green skull in the top corner of the screen – but before you cry foul, in almost all circumstances it's a mistake. In the heat of a game, especially in *CS*, it's very easy to mistake a terrorist for a counter-terrorist in a

darkened room, or to shoot someone instinctively when they dash round a corner in front of you. In these cases, all you can do is feel suitably sheepish and apologise later.

Generally speaking, llamas are either new to the game and are playing badly because they can't help it, or they're old hands pretending to be new players, and are hamming it up accordingly. Most of the time it's easy to ignore a llama, but there are occasions when they come and stand in front of you and obliterate your view when

sniping, or empty a thousand rounds of ammunition into your backside before realising that you're on the same team as them. Llamas can also be found at the back of maps, firing their machine gun at enemy troops before the troops in question are in range.

Although cheaters have always been around in many forms and in almost every game ever published, online games are an obvious target

ACTION TRACKER

GAME ON

Handy software to help you find the best servers

Want to get shooting, eh? We recommend a dose of GameSpy 3D, the world's most popular online game browser. This enables you to update and keep watch on different games servers from all over the planet: *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal*, *Kingpin*, *Rogue Spear*, *Soldier Of Fortune*, *Half-Life*... the list will make your eyes water. All you have to do is press a button and GameSpy reports back where the games are being played. Your online life is incomplete without it.

1 Download a copy of GameSpy 3D. Visit www.gamespy3d.com and grab the feature-limited, free version of GameSpy 3D. It's less than 2Mb to download, so shouldn't prove taxing even for the slowest modem connection. Double-click on the installer to get cracking.

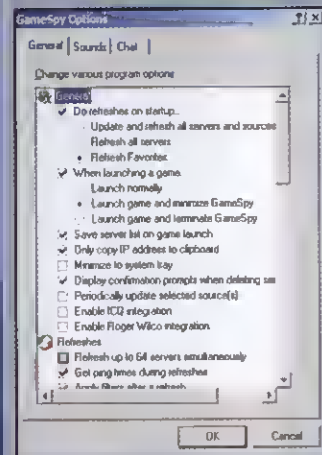


① The main GameSpy 3D screen.

3 The main screen can be a little confusing at first, but once you've figured it out it's pretty simple. The first thing you need to do (if it's not already in progress) is get a list of all the games. Press **Ctrl + L** or select **Refresh All Sources** from the **Tools** menu.

4 Once you've played the waiting game – depending on how many games you have on your PC, this could take up to 20 minutes – you'll need to add the fastest or more popular servers to your favourites list. Click on the **Ping** column to sort the servers by speed, then right-click **Add To Favourites** on the ones you want to bookmark. We can recommend *PC ZONE*, *Demon UK*, *Blue Yonder* and *Wireplay*.

5 Click on the drop-down box at the top of the list, marked **Only Show These Servers**, and select **Favourites**. Hey presto – your servers of choice appear in the list, giving you an at-a-glance overview of gaming activity. Double-click on a server to get in on the game.



② The GameSpy 3D Options screen.

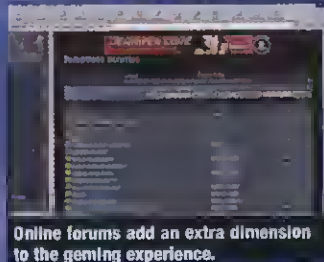
2 GameSpy will start by searching your hard drive for the games you have installed. Let it finish. The Options screen that appears gives you the chance to customise your copy of GameSpy and set game-specific options. For the moment, press the **OK** button, as you can always open this screen and make changes at a later date.

for tricksters. It must be said that at one time or another most players have used a cheat, have gone looking for one, or have exploited a loophole in the code to give them an advantage or disrupt play. Ninety-nine per cent of these people realise that, while it might be funny for a few seconds, cheating causes the people you're playing with to leave the game, and hold the view that you have the IQ of a salad bar. Now what's the point in that?

If you do find yourself on the end of a torrent of abuse resulting from a breach of online etiquette, it's likely that you'll spend the rest of the game being picked upon by all and sundry. Apologise and, if necessary, explain that you're new. Being nice about a mistake often wrong-foots the people who are getting irate at you, and they'll soon climb down off the curtains. Remember that the majority of Internet gamers are there because they want to enjoy



Massively Interstellar: Jumpgate.



Online forums add an extra dimension to the gaming experience.



Going online against real human opponents can enhance all sorts of games.

DECISION TIME

WHERE TO GO

Strangely enough, not everyone wants to fight terrorism, so they made some other online games too...

Once you're plumbed in and ready to roll, you need to decide what you're going to play. And if you thought that the choice was simple, think again. While it's true that the most popular areas are dominated by a small number of games — FPSs and online RPGs — the sheer scope of entertainment will take your breath away. There are so many ways to enjoy yourself, ranging from playing multiplayer *Scrabble*, *Hangman*, *Tetris*, *Tanks*, *Hearts*, even *Pong*. We'll look at a number of top titles from each genre.

ACTION

1. Counter-Strike



❶ *Counter-Strike* can become a way of life. Suck it and see for yourself.

More info: www.counter-strike.net

What it is: The king of online shooters — and it's free. Keep an eye out for the install file on magazine cover discs, as the download is on the large side. Everyone with an Internet connection needs to play it at least once, because *CS* has the power to revolutionise your weekends. It's a modification for *Half-Life*, which means it uses Valve's

gaming engine for power, so you need *Half-Life* installed before you can play.

How to play: Pick a team, either counter-terrorist or terrorist. Press the tab key to see which team is down on numbers; try to balance things up. First time out, don't go wasting money on armour or ammo. Aim at heads and not at torsos. If you have the bomb, press 5 to select it. G will drop it if you don't have the balls to see it through. Stick close to your team and don't wander off.

2. Unreal Tournament



❶ *Unreal Tournament* is very slick, easy to play and a real blast. Try it!

More info:

www.unrealtournament.com

What it is: A slicker, enjoyable alternative to the more hardcore style of *Quake III: Arena*. A number of different play styles allow everyone to get a good game in; some maps are deathmatch perfection. The sniper rifle is a real treat, and the nuke a real hoot. The interface is like nothing else, making the game a cinch to set up and get into.

How to play: The pulse weapon you start the game with isn't much cop, so go in search of a beefier alternative. The

disc thrower is a little haphazard and the sniper rifle is only of use on certain maps. The golden rule is to keep moving and keep jumping. Keep a mental note of where the power-ups are and don't be afraid to break off from combat in order to replenish your health.

3. Quake III: Arena



❶ Very pretty, but not to everyone's taste. And the players seem to moonwalk.

More info: www.quake3arena.com

What it is: Often used as the benchmark for first-person gaming, but not nearly as popular as its rivals. The style of play is not to everyone's taste, with games dominated by people who play it too much. *Unreal Tournament* offers a wider variety of play and provides more fun and less frustration for first-time players.

How to play: Don't get frustrated if you die a lot; being good at *Quake* requires a lot of skill and even more practice. If you're a newbie, start with team games and whenever possible fall back behind your teammates. Find the rocket launcher and plug away at the enemy: aim at their feet, anticipate where they're going to land and fire again.

ROLE-PLAYING

1. EverQuest



❶ *EverQuest* is one of the better looking online role-playing games.

More info: www.everquest.com

What it is: A 3D multiplayer fantasy role-playing game. Effectively a fictional clone of society, with races, economic systems, alliances and politics. A thousand simultaneous players, 40 skill sets, 12 races and 14 classes, sewn together into a polygonal 3D environment with varied textures, diverse locations and multiple camera angles. The downside is that you have to pay \$40 (£25) for a boxed copy of *EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark* and then \$10 (£7) for a month's unlimited access to the servers. That's in addition to whatever you pay for Internet access.

How to play: The whole idea of *EverQuest* is that it is almost infinitely adaptable — you play the way you want to play. Check out the EverQuest Vault at eqvault.ign.com for indispensable game guides, rules of conduct, spell books and guides on how to get the best from every class. Planet EverQuest at www.planeteverquest.com is not as comprehensive but always growing.

← themselves. For many people it's a cheap alternative to being down the pub, and the last thing they need is aggravation. Few gamers are deliberately antagonistic and these days they can't afford to be. With cheating on the increase, server operators are clamping down on the

Cheat on the PC ZONE game server and you'll answer to this guy.



Starpeace: online *SimCity* in space.

2. Ultima Online

❶ *Ultima Online* may be considered past it, but its popularity remains high.

More info: www.uo.com

What it is: An online fantasy RPG in much the same vein as *EverQuest*, but considered by most to be the inferior. At one point it was the most revolutionary, massively multiplayer game ever devised, but it has since been put in the shade by the likes of *EverQuest* and *Asheron's Call*, which arguably feature better graphics and more involving gameplay. *Ultima Online* also has a reputation as a haven for player killers; people who move about the land in bands, murdering people for kicks and spoiling their game. The boxed copy of *UO* costs \$40 (£26) and includes one month's play time – normally \$10 (£7) per month.

How to play: Again, it's just not possible to cover all the possible angles of massively multiplayer role-playing games within the confines of this article. Visit cob.xrgaming.net and uovault.ign.com for more information. Suffice it to say, it involves chopping down a lot of trees.

3. Asheron's Call

❶ *Asheron's Call* is perhaps the most visually impressive online RPG yet.

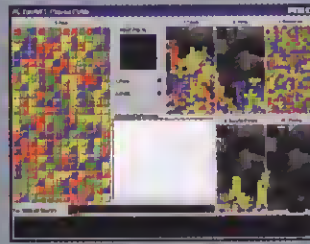
More info: www.asheronscall.com

What it is: Visually, *Asheron's Call* is superior to both *EverQuest* and *Ultima Online*. The first thing that strikes you is the draw distance: the game doesn't suffer from the same pop-up problems common to *EverQuest*. Stand on the shores of an island and neighbouring lands are clearly visible. You also notice insects and birds flying about, and the range of racial differences in *Asheron's Call* appears nearly infinite, making it feel the more realistic title overall. Importantly, the game is considerably cheaper (£19 plus £7 monthly subscription), is backed by Microsoft, and a sequel is on the way. **How to play:** See www.rpgplanet.com/asheronscall and ac.stomped.com for details.

MISCELLANEOUS**1. Tetrisnet**

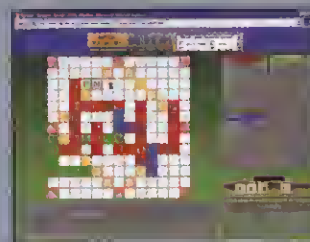
More info: www.tetrisnet.org

What it is: A mad, online multiplayer version of *Tetris*. Bonus blocks add a new vindictive dimension to the game.



❶ *Tetrisnet*: it's old and cheating is rife, but it makes for a refreshing change.

How to play: If you know how to play *Tetris* – and let's face it, who doesn't – you can play *Tetrisnet*. Chalk up as many complete lines as you can, as you are then rewarded with special bonus features, such as the ability to add a line to an opponent, explode bombs, juggle pieces and so on.

2. Wordox

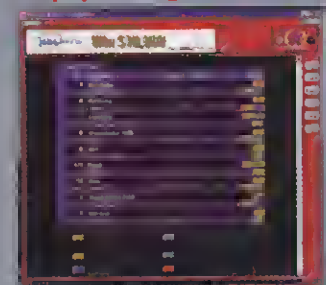
❶ *Wordox* is a great *Scrabble* variant that you play within your browser.

More info: www.flipside.com/games/word/wordox

What it is: A fast-paced *Scrabble* game that you play from within your Internet browser. As you'd expect, it

involves creating words from a selection of letter tiles. Not one for the dyslexics among you.

How to play: Try to place tiles on the orange and pink squares to gain special orange points, which are essentially score multipliers.

3. Mplayer card games

❶ Free to download and play. If you're into card games, visit mplayer.com.

More info: www.mplayer.com/cardgames

What it is: More multiplayer card games than you can shake a large stick at. Download, installation and account creation are swift and automatic, so there's no mucking about. The games available are varied and there are a good number of opponents at a broad range of skill levels.

How to play: Learn the rules. If in doubt, check the comprehensive help screens for details of how to play the various games. Bookmark www.pagat.com for a great resource on rules and regulations for every card game under the sun.



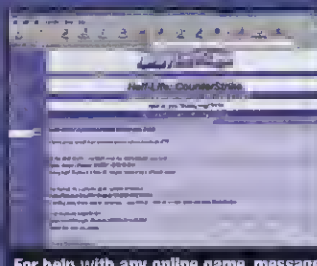
Teamwork pays in *Team Fortress Classic*.



The alternative life of *Ultima Online*.



The visually stunning *Asheron's Call*.



For help with any online game, message boards are a good place to start.

idiots and are banning them left, right and centre. Don't be one of them.

IT'S ABOUT THE GAME

When it comes to playing online games, you have to remember why you are playing them in the first place. First and foremost you are there to play against real people and you'll find out very quickly that most of them are better than you. If it's a game you like, stick with it – for weeks if necessary.

Secondly, online games are about playing alongside other people. Whether you're capturing the flag in *Unreal Tournament* or chopping wood in *Ultima*

Online, there are many players willing to help, either through the in-game chat (unless it's a first-person action game), or via the countless forums and news sites set up by developers and fans of the game. If someone is getting mouthy, ignore them. If they are cheating, sting like a canary or go to another server.

It's the real people you meet in online games that make them what they are, so talk to them, team up with them and in time others will look to you for help. The only thing you shouldn't do is meet your new online friends in the flesh, but that's another story altogether... [27]

Battles beyond the stars in

BATTLE ISLE: DARKSPACE

If you've got a game set in space, maybe you should call **Richie Shoemaker**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Palestar
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
WEBSITE Summer
OUT TBC

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Hundreds of players per game
- Intuitive control system
- Impressive scale and graphics
- Seamless mix of action and strategy

Don't tell anyone, but *Battle Isle 2* was the game that encouraged me to buy a PC. In fact, if my memory serves me correctly, it was a review of that game, written by a young Paul Mallinson in some long-extinct PC games mag, that got me to thinking *Battle Isle 2* was a good game and that

something a little more powerful than an Atari ST would be required to play it. Small world.

Well, strictly speaking, no. Though the name is tacked on the front in an apparent attempt to coax *Battle Isle* fans to the cause, *DarkSpace* has next to nothing in common with any of the other *Battle Isle* games released to date. It isn't set on some faraway planet, neither is it strictly speaking a strategy game, and it certainly isn't one whereby the players take it in turns to make their move. You could argue that there are a few battles, and that from orbit you can make out the odd *isle* on a planet below, but *Battle Isle*? Nah. Sorry mate, don't get it.

STARFLEET COMMAND

So what is *DarkSpace* then? Well, in essence it is a space combat game. One in which you command ships of a more impressive girth than those in either *FreeSpace* or *X-Wing*. Unlike most space combat games however, you don't control things from a first-person perspective inside your ship. Like *Homeworld* or *Starfleet Command*, your view is almost one of a poor mechanic, tethered by a big long pipe and thrown out the airlock, forever to be swung around the vacuum of space as the ship races across the black emptiness. To be more succinct, your view of the action is just as these screenshots suggest. Move the mouse and the camera orbits your ship, and although you can zoom in and out, your ship remains the





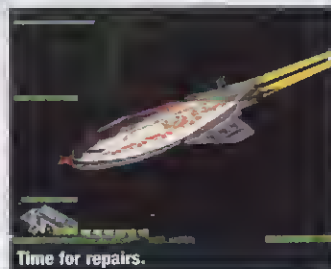
It sure is purdy.



"Oi. Watch it."



Fusion drive engaged.



Time for repairs.



The future's so bright you gotta wear shades.

centre of attention – until such time as it erupts in a ball of flames and you find yourself back at base requesting a new ship.

Anyone who enjoyed either of Interplay's *Starfleet Command* games will instantly find *DarkSpace* to their liking, even though there are no Klingons, the mechanics of the game are very similar. Set in 3D space, the action is entirely 2D, with the planets, asteroids, gaseous clouds

planets or board enemy ships yet), the scale of what is to come is already in evidence. As you can see, a single game can be set across dozens of planets and systems. Theoretically the servers can handle up to 256 players and although I've barely seen more than 50 enter a game

before lag renders things unplayable, the potential for teamplay and stealth tactics is quite impressive. Space, or indeed the planets occupying it, have rarely been portrayed at such a scale, and as soon as more bugs are eliminated and more features incorporated, I'm quite sure I'll be even more impressed.

Yet to be added are the full complement of 18 ships, the fighter craft you can send forth from your

"Anyone who enjoyed either of Interplay's *Starfleet Command* games will instantly find *DarkSpace* to their liking, even though there are no Klingons"

you turn left or right (port and starboard if you want to be arsey), speed up or slow down, while the mouse lets you change view, target planets, other ships and so on.

RHYTHM AND STEALTH

Although many features have yet to be incorporated (you can't bombard

carriers, boarding actions and planetary defences, but just playing through ship-to-ship combat alone the game is great fun. You can rise through the ranks, earn medals and get your hands on upgrades and better ships. Of course, I'm far from that stage. I haven't even managed to bag me a bad guy, but I will. ☐

SEARCH ENGINE

Hit the dark heights of cyberspace by logging onto to these websites

www.palestar.com

This is the rather underwhelming website of Austin-based developer Palestar, creator of *DarkSpace*. You won't find much about the game, neither will you discover too much about those behind it, but at least it beats being rumbled by the wife while you are logged on to www.doggynipples.com.

www.bluebyte.net/darkspace-e/
The first port of call is the official site, run by Blue Byte, the publishers of every *Battle Isle* game since the series began (until now that is – they've been bought up by Ubi Soft). It is here you can download Blue Byte's Game Channel software, though you're probably a little late

if you were hoping to join in the current round of beta testing.

www.space-combat.net
The new URL for the nomadic space slm portal A Talent For War. If you're into games without a lot of atmosphere, this is the best site to visit.

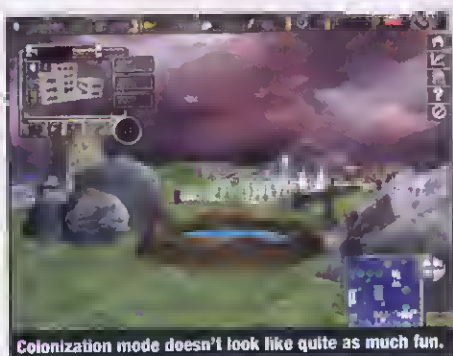
www.battleisle.net
As it says on the tin (if it were in a tin), this tansite is all about *Battle Isle*, specifically last year's *Battle Isle: The Androsia War*, and this year's (hopefully) *Battle Isle: DarkSpace*. There isn't much here that you won't find at Blue Byte's digital home, but as the months roll on expect this to change.



126 unique spells make for one hell of a fireworks display.



Dive into the fray or just stand back and nick the loot while no one's looking.



Colonization mode doesn't look like quite as much fun.



Join up with your mates or go solo.



Use your factories to create your own unique weapons.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Netamin
PUBLISHER Netamin
WEBSITE www.fallenage.com
OUT Beta April 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Unique merging of RTS, RPG and turn-based strategy
- ★ 500 levels of action-packed gameplay
- ★ 126 unique spells and skills, 10,000 unique items per server
- ★ Three race/class combinations, each with six sub-classes

You can count on humanity to bugger things up. Not content with our vast supplies of knowledge and technology, we have to go and delve too deeply into those rites with the big red 'Forbidden' signs stamped all over them. These activities attracted the attentions of Thothan, the Dark Ones, who were mighty pissed off and decided to cut through the human race like a knife through butter. Those who were left formed an army under the Great Emperor Siam and prepared for the ultimate scrap.

Fallen Age is set after the battle's been fought, in approximately 6415AD, when the Emperor's been slain and

FALLEN AGE

The world is torn apart and *Rhianna Pratchett* is first in line for a piece of the pie

the world is up for grabs. Enter the Forgotten Children, the heirs of humanity, who have emerged from the catacombs deep beneath the earth to unify mankind, develop a new civilisation and annihilate the Thothan. Now it's your turn.

This massive multiplayer game from Californian developers Netamin impressively manages to mix as many genres as possible,

classes and special abilities such as Astral, Saint and Paladin. Then it's time to start exploring the five huge gaming continents, collect some goodies, complete a few quests, improving your stats, learn spells and skills, à la *Diablo II*. There's the option to form parties of up to six people of similar stats, although if you're a bit more of a loner it's perfectly possible to play the game as a single player. The

are allotted your own piece of land to do with as you will. From there, through a turn-based strategy system, you can build your own town, laboratories and factories which are used to increase your power, standing and even create your own personalised unique weaponry. Eventually, when you have built up a substantial army you can begin a real-time assault on your enemies if you prefer a more strategic approach.

Netamin has taken great pains to try and please as many gamers as possible, which can sometimes go horribly wrong and just end up pissing everyone off. However, *Fallen Age*'s beauty is that it does not force you to submit to any one style of gameplay. You can play it purely as an RTS/turn-based game, or spend your entire game time pottering around *EverQuest* style, completing quests, collecting junk and marrying deranged Americans. Bliss. **PC**

“Manages to mix as many genres as possible, being a fantasy/sci-fi hybrid and a combo of RTS, RPG, God game and turn-based strategy”

being a fantasy/sci-fi hybrid and a combo of RTS, RPG, God game and turn-based strategy. The majority of the game is played within a 3D isometric interface, and starts with the creation of your character. You have the choice of three different character classes, each of which have individual sub-

world of *Fallen Ages* is so detailed you can even get married there, if you find that one set of pixels that's just perfect for you.

Something of a sub-game exists in the RTS-style colonisation part of the game, which works in 3D God mode and comes into play after you reach level 30, when you

3RD WORLD

Richie Shoemaker has lost it completely, to be sure

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER XYZ Team
PUBLISHER TBA
WEBSITE www.3rdworld.cc
OUT Late 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Space combat for the *Elite* fan
- ★ Role-playing for *Diablo* nutters
- ★ Management for *Theme Park* tycoons
- ★ And then some...

Sometimes it can take hours to think of a way to write an introduction to a preview or review. I personally find my inspiration while on the Tube. Alas, for this preview I'm in the office and while mulling over the words *3rd World* in my mind, it came to me that when pronounced in a dodgy Irish brogue, *3rd World* sounds like *Turd World*. Well, it was funny for about a nanosecond. Still, it's an introduction. Now, on with the game...

“3rd World has two things that make it stand out: its modular design and its third-person isometric view”

As you will no doubt deduce from the pictures laid at random across this page, *3rd World* has nothing to do with Africa or, to be more politically correct, the developing nations. Nope, *3rd World* is science fiction through and through, and like so many online games inching their way to release, *3rd World* borrows heavily from the classic trade 'em up *Elite*.

As you would expect then, you start with a wimpy little ship and a small wad of cash, and must trade and dogfight your way across the

universe, hopefully picking up a few upgrades, plenty more money, new ships and hopefully a healthy degree of notoriety – especially important seeing as this is an online-only title.

YOU HAVE SPACEMAIL

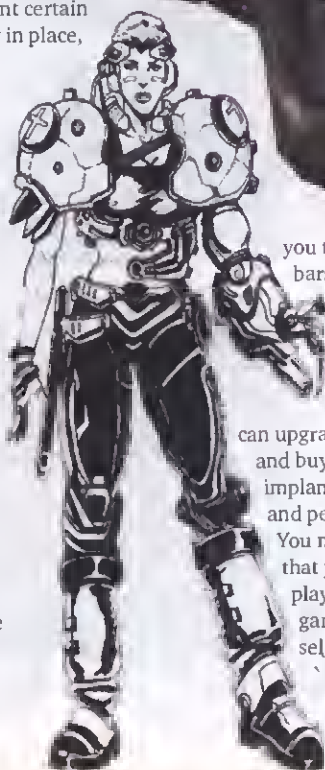
But there are a couple of features that make *3rd World* stand out from the crowd: one is the modular design of the game and the other is the third-person isometric view you play through whenever you are docked at a space station.

XYZ Team, the Eastern European developer of *3rd World*, plans to update the game on a regular basis, not only by releasing new ships, weapons, maps and tradable items, but by doing so at the demands of the players. At the moment certain 'modules' are already in place, including ICQ tools (SpaceICQ), email

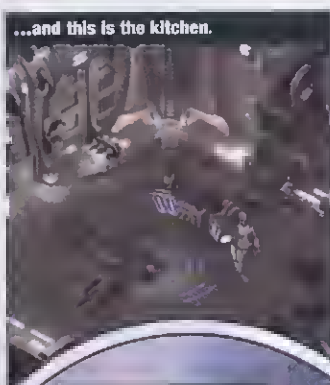
(SpaceMail), CorpGen (which seems to be a tool for organising player guilds), and tools that will even allow you to run your own space station, from hiring staff to setting up defences and trade routes.

The isometric engine kicks in when players land on space stations. Enabling

you to roam the bars, shops and other rooms when docked, as you would in *Diablo*. Here, too, you can upgrade your character and buy cybernetic implants, new sidearms and personal items. You may even find that you prefer to play through the game this way, selling your



If the owner doesn't like you, you may not get in.



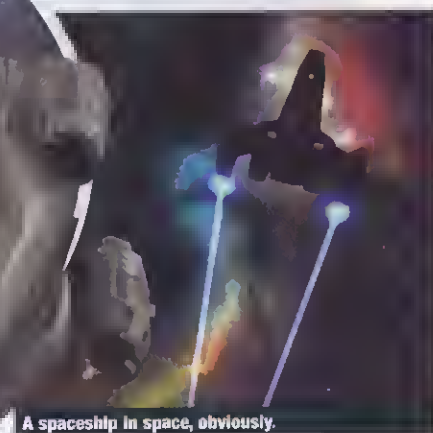
...and this is the kitchen.



"Bloody kids."



Ships of all sizes will be available.



A spaceship in space, obviously.

ship and travelling as a passenger to other stations.

WANDERING STARS

Games that try to be all things to all men often fail, but we have high hopes for *3rd World*. The 3D space combat and trading bits, the isometric role-playing bits and the resource-management space station bits are all intelligently linked to offer routes for people to choose, rather than just being an empty plain to wander around aimlessly.

Of course, I could be completely wrong, but with beta testing due to start in the next couple of months, I for one am looking forward to finding out. **PCZ**

ERACER

★ £24.99 • Rage Software • www.eraceronline.com • Out April

Paul Presley has no idea what the 'e' stands for either. Neither, we suspect, do the good people at Rage



The right kind of annoying. Many a slip twist wicket and slip, as my cricket coach used to say while polishing his stumps in front of the boys' First XI. By which, of course, I mean that getting the difficulty levels right in a game is a tricky affair. Make things too hard and you enrage rather than entertain. Make them too easy and you'll turn people off quicker than an all-swimsuit episode of *Last Of The Summer Wine*. Luckily Rage Software has managed to get things just right with its online race 'em up *eRacer*.

Essentially it's your basic, run-of-the-mill arcade driving game. Fast cars, tight tracks, plenty of tyre squealing and engine revving. Of course, this being from Rage it naturally has graphics that make jaws drop, eyes bulge and pants expand (so to speak). And being from Rage it naturally requires a PC with better specs than Dollond & Aitchison. GeForces and Pentium 4s all round, barman.

TOOLED UP

Assuming you can run it OK, *eRacer* is curiously addictive. It starts off like the hardest thing you've ever played, but once you come to terms with the fact that the brake pedal is as important as the accelerator you start to get into the swing of things. More tracks and cars open up and the game expands, and that's when you take it online.

Rest easy, I'm not about to tell you that it's a horrible experience or anything. Online *eRacer* is just as absorbing as

offline *eRacer*. Noticeable lag is pretty thin on the ground and the old problem of one spin leaving you miles behind everyone else is pretty much nonexistent, as most of the courses have been well designed. They're tight and twisting enough to allow most drivers to continually catch up with one another, while remaining varied enough to retain your interest. Racing across the deck of an aircraft carrier? You know that's too good an opportunity to pass up.

EVIL COMPUTER SCUM

OK, I know all you cyberstudz and technojockeys turned to this little magazinette to read about the cutting edge world of online gaming, but if I may be permitted to blaspheme for a moment I'd like to draw your attention towards the single player or 'offline' game (as I believe the technical lexicography puts it).

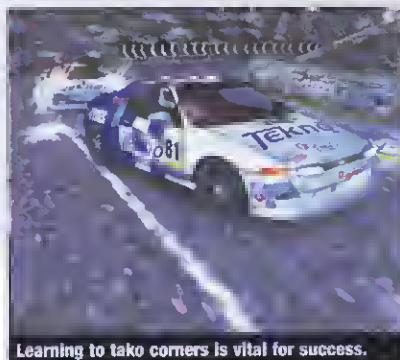
It's a commonly held conceit that computer intelligence is no match for the human mind (at least in gaming terms. When it comes to building cars, calculating quantum mathematical theory or the enslavement of the human race through killer robots, we are sorely lagging behind our autonomous cousins). It therefore comes as something of a welcome surprise to find that the artificial opponents in the single-player game are every bit as sneaky, vindictive and 'alive' as any Uruguayan rugby team could hope to be.

eRacer is not a simulation, not by the stretchiest stretch of imagination. Hence most races involve more shunting, side swiping and deliberate ramming than a Dutch porn film. Most racing games lack the ability to create 'realistic' opposition, leaving you driving against a perpetual snake of

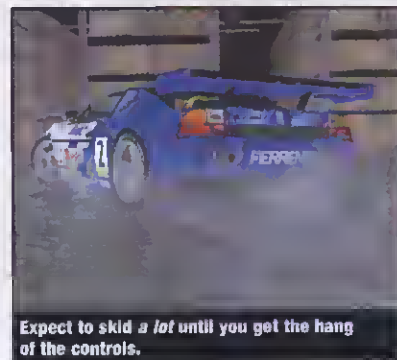


The CPU cars behave like aggressive humans.

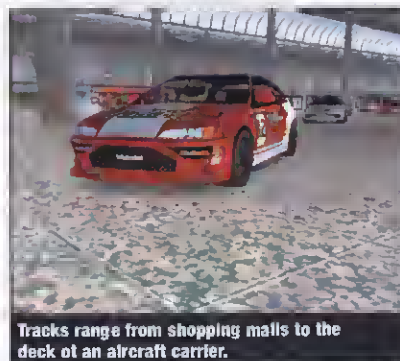
“Most races involve more shunting, side swiping and deliberate ramming than a Dutch porn film”



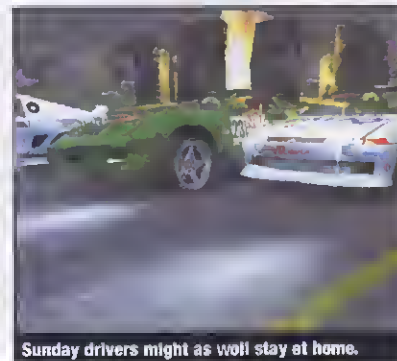
Learning to take corners is vital for success.



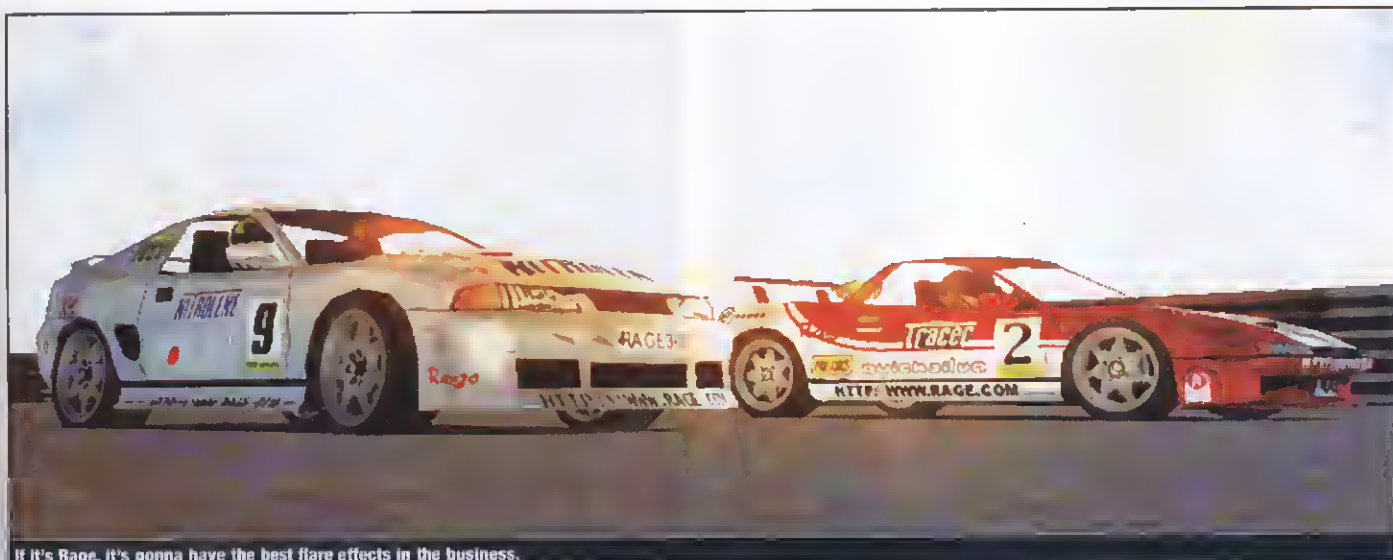
Expect to skid a lot until you get the hang of the controls.



Tracks range from shopping malls to the deck of an aircraft carrier.



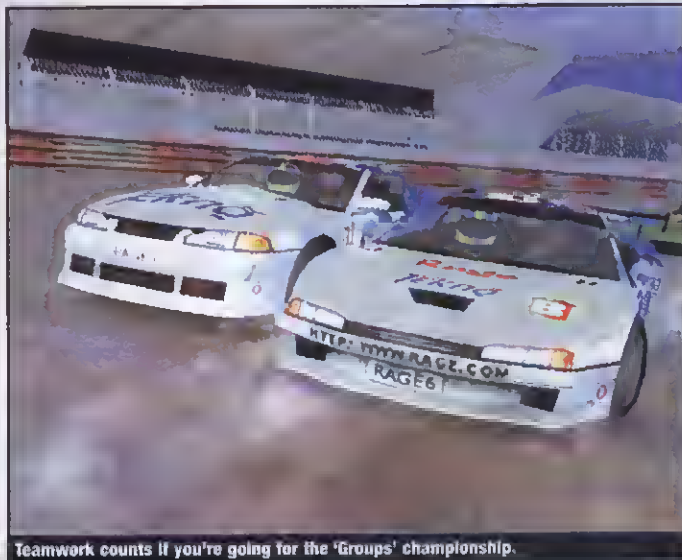
Sunday drivers might as well stay at home.



If it's Rage, it's gonna have the best flare effects in the business.



Time to buy those GeForce3s.



Teamwork counts if you're going for the 'Groups' championship.

perfect-race-line-hugging drones. Not here. *eRacer's* computerised drivers are evil. Evil through and through. They'll not only take great delight in giving you a subtle nudge into a barrier as they drive past, but they'll fight among each other like fat schoolgirls scrapping over a chocolate éclair.

All of which has the unnerving effect of making you think they are real, bipedal human being people. You will find yourself swearing like a Tourette's sufferer and hunting them down when they do you wrong. Which is as it should be.

DRIVE FOR PROFIT

Of course, the simple truth is that *eRacer* could well be the best racing game the online world has ever seen, but without support from both the gaming community and Rage itself, all you're left with is a pretty-looking arcade driver with limited long term appeal. Luckily Rage is not only planning to host regular

tournaments and championships, but a global ranking system on the *eRacer* website ensures that you'll want to keep bringing those lap times down by a second or two.

The terminally lonely are also appeased with a nice sense of community at the site. Because you'll have to register to enter (free, luckily), you are given a personal webpage and the ability to send webmail challenges to fellow drivers. You can also grab extra courses and cars to keep the game interesting.

If it gets the support then there's no reason other than the end of the world to assume *eRacer* will be the last word in online racing entertainment. Technically it's about as perfect as it gets. A touch difficult for the newcomer perhaps, but if you wanted things easy then you shouldn't be playing games online. ☒

VERDICT

UPPERS Looks like a million dollars • Races like a million dollars in a particularly fast car • Online tournaments and prizes (probably not for a million dollars though)

DOWNERS Needs a hefty PC to play well • Not for beginners

★★★★★

Could be the *Counter-Strike* of racers



Ⓢ Better cars can only be yours by winning races.



You can replay goals from a variety of angles, complete with big squiggly lines.

Premier League

A3

		Home	Away												
		Pld	W	D	L	GF	GA	W	D	L	GF	GA	OD	PTS	Form
1	Ipswich	7	2	1	0	4	1	2	2	0	4	2	5	15	DDWW
2	Derby	7	2	1	0	3	2	2	1	1	10	4	10	14	DDWLW
3	Coventry	7	1	1	1	3	3	0	1	6	3	3	13	WLWDW	
4	Middlesbrough	7	1	1	1	3	2	2	0	2	0	3	12	WLWD	
5	Liverpool	7	1	0	2	3	4	2	0	1	6	0	12	LWWWL	
6	Leicester	7	2	1	1	0	1	2	3	1	3	2	6	11	DWLWD
7	Newcastle	7	2	0	1	2	3	1	2	1	1	2	-1	11	WLLWD
8	West Ham	7	2	1	2	0	7	1	0	1	3	1	10	WDWWL	
9	Manchester C.	7	2	0	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	0	10	LLWLD
10	Tottenham	7	2	0	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	0	10	DWWLL	
11	Everton	7	1	0	2	2	3	1	3	0	8	3	1	9	DWDLW
12	Bradford	7	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	4	0	9	BDLWD	
13	Southampton	7	1	3	0	3	1	1	0	2	2	4	0	8	DWDLW
14	Manchester U.	7	1	0	2	1	2	2	0	2	3	3	-1	9	LLWWW
15	Leeds	7	2	0	2	4	8	1	0	2	3	4	-2	9	LLWLW

After only seven games, my star-studded Leeds side courts the bottom of the table.

After only seven games, my star-studded Leeds side courts the bottom of the table.

PLAYASMANAGER

★ £6-12 per season (depending on division) • Anco • www.playasmanager.co.uk • Out now

The first finished online football management sim is here. Mark Hill logs himself into relegation



We haven't been very kind to the *Player Manager* series over the years. The last instalment scored a mere 54 per cent, and its simplistic gameplay has never found much favour in our hardened *Champ Man* heads. But that very simplicity is what

makes it so well suited to an online environment. It's also the only one to boast 3D match highlights, but is it going to persuade all those people waiting for *Championship Manager Online*?

TRANSFER SCRAMBLE

The first thing you need to know about PAM is that it isn't

aimed at *Championship Manager* fanatics, but rather fantasy league players. So if you're looking for realism and depth, you've come to the wrong place. Otherwise, all you need to do is pick a team and start playing (see our How It Works panel, below, for more details).

The second thing you need to know is that you can forget realistic transfer systems. If you've got the money, the biggest stars in the world won't have any problem

joining your bunch of shitty relegation-strugglers.

The start of every season is guaranteed to become a mad scramble to sign as many star players as you can. This, of course, will take your team to the edge of bankruptcy, so you inevitably have to sell off a few overpriced reserves to get yourself back in the black.

Since the only teams managed by humans are the English ones (or Scottish, if you choose to play in that league), Italian and Spanish teams

become little more than large shops where you can stroll in with your virtual trolley, picking the players that catch your eye off the shelf. There are plans to slowly expand the game into all the European leagues, so this scramble should be avoided. I can't imagine a human Lazio manager selling his stars to English no-hopers. Until then, the game we played should be symptomatic of how it's going to work.

Within days, Coventry had managed to sign half of Italy's

Leeds LLWLW 15th Premier League

4 mins 7 March 2001, 10:00 GMT

Manager Mark Hill	
1 N. Martyn	2.1M
2 T. Helveg	R 2.5M
3 C. Berginho	L 2.3M
4 J. Guardado	8.1M
5 J. Woodgate	12M TX
6 M. Duberry	5M
7 L. Bowyer	R 0.6M
8 H. Kewell	L 17M
9 R. Nistaeiro	L/R 5.1M
10 M. Viduka	6.3M
11 P. Vieira	L/R 2.1M
12 D. Metcal	L 3M
13 E. Bakke	L 3.5M
14 I. Herte	L 2.7M
15 J. Decourt	1.6M CT
16 O. Kelly	R 3.7M CT

R. Keane	5.3M	TX
D. Hoy	3M	
J. McPhail	L 4.9M	TX BID
D. Mills	R 2.3M	
D. Milosevic	2.7M	
T. Heckworth	3.5M	TX
J. Wilcox	L 1.8M	
R. Ferdinand	13M	
J. Burns	R 2.5M	
D. Campbell	L/R 18M	
M. Bridge	L/R 0.5M	TX
W. Boyle	R 3.2M	
D. Betty	0.90K	CT

Right click to Swap Shirts

Data: Price Stats: Analysis Fixtures

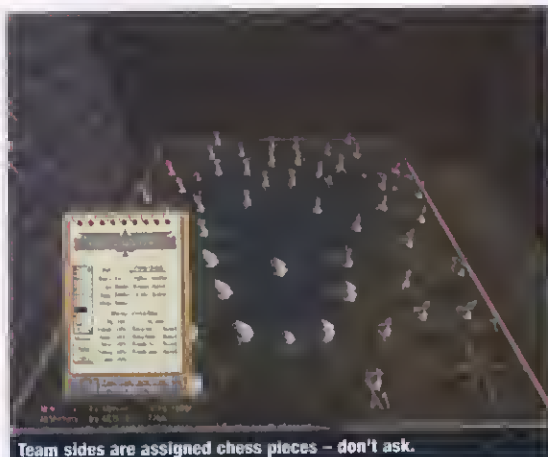
A lot of player valuations are also great works of fiction.

GETTING STARTED

HOW IT WORKS

Simply choose a league and start managing – and stop worrying about your phone bill

Starting a game couldn't be easier. Just go to www.playasmanager.com and sign up. You will need to download the game, or even better get it from this month's cover disc. The cost varies depending on which league you choose, from £5.87 for a third division side to £11.75 for a Premiership one. The seasons are continuous, with promotions and relegations, and can last from six weeks (with a match played every day) to 20 weeks (weekend-only matches). Just choose whichever suits you best and start managing. You don't have to worry about your phone bill too much either, since the bulk of the game is played offline, almost in a play-by-email system. Every time you log on you download the information and, once you've made all the changes, bids and decisions you want, upload your own information. The 3D highlights are only around 300K, so download times are kept to a minimum. Sweet.



Team sides are assigned chess pieces – don't ask.



Bang. Pow. Kaboom. Die! Die! Die!



The ultimate BUFF (big, ugly, fat ...).

Great cammo. Wrong environment.

Ground + plane = very bad

ACES HIGH V1.06

★ \$29.99 per month • High Tech Creations • Out now • <http://www.hitechcreations.com>

Dan Emery finds out just how sharp the cutting edge of flight sims is. Ouch...

From the clunky *WarBirds* clone graphics of its first release, to the smooth, good-looking animations of the latest release, *Aces High* has come a long way. Not content with confining itself to World War II dog fighting, *Aces High* has finally introduced tanks and anti-aircraft vehicles to the game. So, is it all good news?

The short answer is no, but not through any fault of the developers. While *Aces'* graphics are at the cutting edge of current graphic technology, its launch was shadowed online by the release of the *WarBirds III* Beta. While it may seem small fry in the grand scheme of things, the flight sim online community is so

incestuous (everybody knows someone who knows... etc) that what was actually a major update resulted in a 'keeping up appearances' show (remember the *Duke Nukem* launch that was overshadowed by *Quake*?)

Aces High 1.06 has numerous additions, of which

“It has a very strong community, great visuals and a good choice of aircraft – including the Lancaster Bomber”

the most noteworthy are the Fw 190D-9, Fw190F-8, P-51B, Tempest V, La-7, Yak-9T, Ar 234B and Ta 152H planes. Now, although this may look like gibberish, the Tempest is of major importance, as not only was it one of the best aircraft

of WWII, it was also British – something many American developers choose to ignore (and usually don't add to their game). Well, Americans do like to rewrite history, as *U571* proved. (If you haven't seen the film, don't. It's a pile of old donkey's poo.)

In addition to the extra aircraft, 1.06 also sees the introduction of new cloud layers, but this hasn't turned

see, once you hit the cloud it's like an on/off switch has been thrown. Suddenly the view is obscured white, and the second you leave the mist, the switch is thrown and you're back to 20/20 vision. While this may have been easier to program, comparisons with the most recent games leave *Aces High* in the shade. Hopefully, this will be fixed in the next revision.

THE HIGH LIFE

Despite the cosmetic changes, *Aces High* is the same as it ever was. Now this is no bad thing, as the game has a very strong community, some great visuals and a good choice of aircraft. It was, and still is, the only flight sim to actually allow players to fly the Lancaster Bomber (the pride of the RAF).

But sadly, the best bi-plane in the world won't stand up to the earliest jet, and technology

has overtaken *Aces High*, with *IL-2* setting the standard by which all other flight sims are measured. *Aces* is the Sopworth Camel of the flight sim market – it's the epitome of today's technology, but just as the Germans crushed all with their technology in WWII, so will the next gen of flight sims wipe out most of the current ones.

Aces High is fantastic, but everyone's seen what's just around the corner. A great game with no future. At least not in its current form. ☹

VERDICT

- UPPERS Great community • Flat-rate online play
- DOWNERS Looking dated the day of its release by the next gen of sims

★★★★★
Its days are numbered

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO V1.1

★ £29.99 • Interplay • www.interplay.com/giants • Out now

Richie Shoemaker finds *Giants'* online game a slightly rare dish in need of a bit more cooking

Big and beautiful, *Giants* was certainly one of the highlights of last year. Released just before Christmas, it offered a taste of action that freshened the palate: three distinct styles of play through a trio of diverse and wildly exaggerated characters; first- and third-person combat; a sprinkling of strategy; all drizzled in a rich and humorous sauce. Very tasty indeed.

But it was – and still is – a machine-hungry game, requiring at least a PIII-500 and a top-notch graphics card to look its very best. Frustrating, too, was the fact that being linear, to control the eponymous Kabuto, you had to play through the Meccaryn and Sea Reaper

missions. Not that we complained – the single-player game was a feast in itself.

On wheeling out the sweet trolley that is the multiplayer game, you soon discover that far from the one-course wonder of the lone-player missions, there is a whole spread of tempting dishes laid before

you. They are variations on a theme mostly, but you can at least play as either of the three main races whether you have completed the game or not. Deathmatch and team deathmatch are pretty self-explanatory, and

YOU DIRTY LAG

But while all these dishes look tempting, tasting them is altogether different. For one

thing, there is quite a serious imbalance between the races. Although this doesn't assert itself in same-race team

games, it certainly misses the mouth when you try to play Mecc Vs Reaper Vs Kabuto – more so when the numbers playing aren't quite right (it admits as much in the manual). Playing online, *Giants'* worst crime, however, is that actually connecting to a game in the first place is rather difficult. Out of the box, *Giants* multiplayer is positively archaic, requiring you to manually input TCP/IP addresses. And although, thankfully, the game is supported by GameSpy Arcade (download from www.gamespy.com), when you do get in you'll be dogged by lag, even with a high-speed connection to one of the few dedicated servers.

But when you get in with the right mix of players and are used to the imbalance and sniping-focused gameplay, *Giants* really is a lot of fun. Much thought has obviously gone into the multiplayer game, though one can't help but suspect that it was left to last when it came to the testing stage. The V1.1 patch did go

some way to eliminating the bugs and imbalances, but a second patch is long overdue to address the many glitches that remain.

So, certainly not a patch on *Unreal Tournament* or *Counter-Strike*, nor anyway near as popular. But then it was never destined to be. Being such a damn good laugh though, the game's imbalances are offset to a small degree. If multiplayer games were more stable and modem-friendly, *Giants* online could be as satisfying and fulfilling as it is offline. There's still hope... **PCZ**

“On wheeling out the sweet trolley that is the multiplayer game, a whole spread of tempting dishes is laid before you”

VERDICT

UPPERS Loads of multiplayer options • A feast for the eyes
DOWNERS Imbalanced • Laggy • Unstable

★★★★★

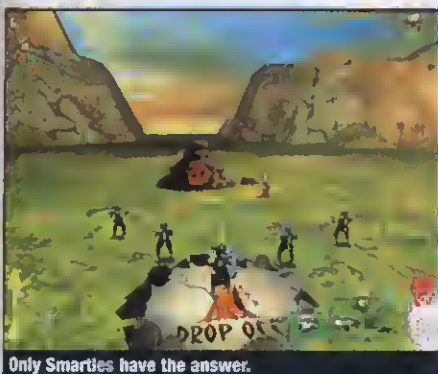
At least the single-player game makes up for it



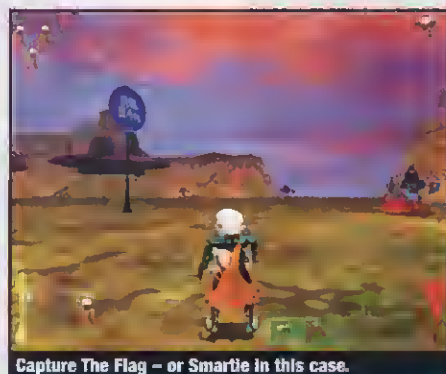
"You really wouldn't like me when I'm angry."



The Mecc's Gyrocopter is their best weapon.



Only Smarties have the answer.



Capture The Flag – or Smartie in this case.

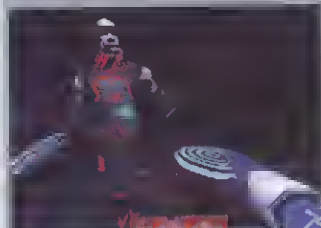


Stay out of the big guys way.

COMING SOON

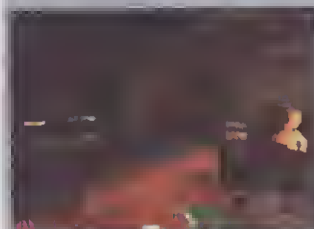
UTRON

Undergoing closed beta testing, *uTron* is a modifier for *Unreal Tournament* based on Disney's *Tron* movie. Featuring both single and multiplayer games, the mod will follow the plot of the film and include weapons and vehicles from the film, meaning we'll be able to throw *Tron* discs, drive light cycles and destroy those flying tank thingys. www.planetunreal.com/utron is the site you might want to visit.



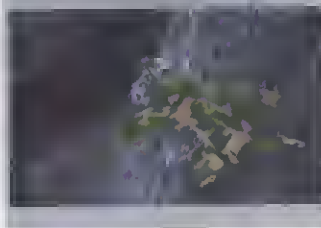
THIEVERY

If you fancy sneaking around in a multiplayer game of *Thief* and don't fancy waiting around for Ion Storm to release *Thief III*, maybe you should take a look at *Thievery* (www.ttlg.com/thievery), a mod for *Unreal Tournament* where a team of thieves try to avoid and outwit a team of powerful guards. Unfortunately, the mod is still under development, but the team is hoping to release a first beta later this year.



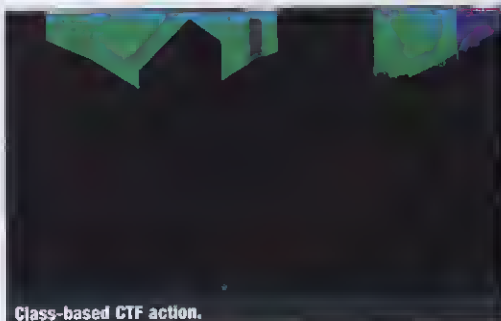
MILITARY FORCES

Those who remember the wonderful *AirQuake* mod, or indeed its sequel, may like to know that the same talented bunch is working on *Military Forces* for *Quake III*. Like *AirQuake*, *Military Forces* will allow multiple players to fly aircraft against each other, new, however, will be the fact that players can also drive tanks and run around on foot, either across tight deathmatch maps or many other modes of play and settings. Check out www.planetquake.com/mfq3.

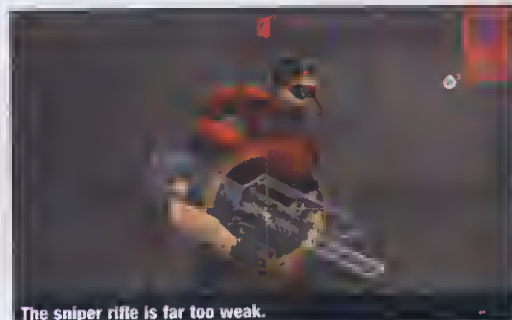


MODWATCH

This month you can look forward to some *Unreal* moments



Class-based CTF action.



The sniper rifle is far too weak.

UNREAL FORTRESS V420

★ Requires full version of *Unreal Tournament* • Out now from www.unrealfortress.com (42.3Mb)



Where the mighty *Team Fortress Classic* led others have followed and *Unreal Fortress* proves itself to be great fun, good looking and every bit as good as its *Quake III* counterpart.

If you haven't tried a class-based game before, a bit of an explanation is in order. You'll be faced with joining one of two teams and then choosing which class of player you want to be, each with their own strengths and weaknesses – a trade-off between firepower and agility. The more heavily armed you are the slower you move. The fast-moving classes on the other hand have a better chance of outrunning the enemy, but will quickly be mown down if caught. The classes reflect an assortment of skills,

such as soldiers, snipers, engineers, medics and spies. The most successful teams have a spread of skills.

The maps are a bit big, but well thought out with plenty of health and armour, good vantage points for long-range fire and enough twisty-turny bits to ensure frantic in-ye-face gorefesting is part of the general concoction. A nice touch is the way that a selection of screens from each map pop-up when you choose which one to go for.

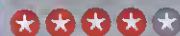
The weapons follow the standard *Fortress* theme, although the chaingun is a limp-wristed affair, both in terms of impact and its sound, and the sniper rifle seems something of a random affair and often does little or no harm to a target.

Our only other gripe is that the flag

carrier is slow and ladders are a pain. Overall though, *Unreal Fortress* is a gem and a must for any *UT* owner. The character models are better than *Q3 Fortress*, the maps more complex than *TFC* and with new and original *Team Fortress* modes planned, we hope and expect *Unreal Fortress* to dominate.

VERDICT

UPPERS Nice interface • Impressive character models
DOWNERS Maps on the large side • Puny chaingun



As good a *Team Fortress* mod as you're likely to find

ROCKET ARENA: UT V1.60

★ Requires full version of *UT* • Out now from www.planetunreal.com/arena (20.8Mb)



The premise behind *Rocket Arena* – be it in its original format for *Quake* or here ported over to *Unreal Tournament* – is a simple one. Give each contestant all the weapons apart from the most powerful (in this case the Redeemer), dispose of the health and armour power-ups, and stick all the players in a small map where there is nowhere to hide but plenty of obstacles to make getting a clear shot more difficult. Sound interesting? It is.

What *Rocket Arena UT* creates is a fast and furious game where no single individual has any inherent advantage. Consequently, the only thing that will keep you alive is your skill and quick reactions. The maps are superb, they really look the part with special effects

adding to the atmosphere – you'll find maps in space, maps in warehouses, maps in castles... Basically, any type of map you can think of.

Another bonus is the fact that the mod works well with bots, so even if you can't find a match on one of the two dozen or so available servers you can set up your own game and get some practice in.

VERDICT

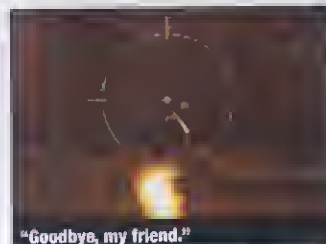
UPPERS Pure and simple • Good map design • Bot support
DOWNERS Not as good as *QIII Rocket Arena*



Pure deathmatch action for *UT*



Excellent maps.



"Goodbye, my friend."

CANNED TUNA SPECIAL EDITION

★ Requires full version of *Half-Life* • Out now from www.half-life.net/randomnine/ (2.1Mb)

How on earth somebody comes up with a name like *Canned Tuna* for a *Half-Life* mod is beyond us, but it doesn't matter because despite its diminutive size it's actually rather clever and should give players a good workout.

The first thing you'll notice is the reduced number of weapons. All you'll have to keep you alive are the crowbar, a laser rifle, a pulse rifle that's straight off the set of *Aliens*, a mortar and sonic trip-mines.

The mod also has five game modes and a bizarre format called Gib The Llama where every odd-numbered respawn (ie: 1st, 3rd, 5th etc) you will spawn as a Llama armed with a

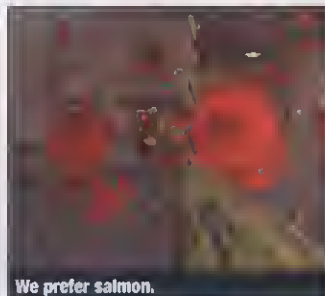
crowbar and get triple points for every kill you manage. Very strange...

The one great limitation for *Canned Tuna*, however, is its online playability. There is hardly ever a server that is running it, which is a shame but hardly surprising considering it's really a hotch-potch of ideas without any real theme or setting.

VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Weird • Small download • Can be played with *Counter-Strike*
↓ **DOWNERS** Not a very cohesive gaming experience • Not very popular

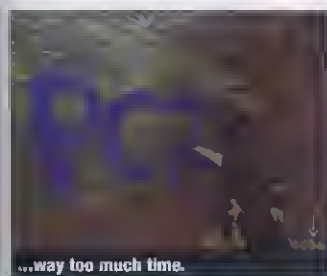
★★★★★ Dolphin friendly



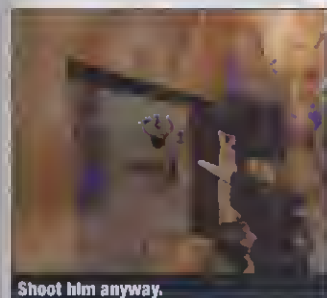
We prefer salmon.



Get the llama.



...way too much time.



Shoot him anyway.

HALF-LIFE PAINTBALL BETA 2.0

★ Requires full version of *Half-Life* • Out now from www.paintball-mod.net (20.1Mb)

Paintball warfare fans always say it's good wholesome fun and nobody gets hurt. But that's not true, is it? One hit and you'll yell words that your mum wouldn't believe you knew. We know, we have the scars.

So here's the safe version. *HL Paintball* is a faithful representation of the game, but all wrapped up in a *CS*-style front end. At the beginning of each game you have a certain amount of cash to buy a gun, ammo and CO2. As you progress and get some kills your funds increase and you can buy bigger guns.

The maps are well designed with plenty of obstacles, vantage points and places to hide. The graphics are simple,

with some textures needing more work, but that's no major problem.

HL Paintball features adequate online support, so if the team can get more servers and brush up on the appearance a bit this could do well – even without all the gore that is usually so popular online.

VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Cheaper and cleaner than the real thing • Fairly authentic
↓ **DOWNERS** Graphics need more work • A bit pointless

★★★★★ *Counter-Strike* with coloured balls

SVEN CO-OP V1.9

★ Requires full version of *Half-Life* • Out now from www.svencoop.com (14.5Mb)

Sven Co-op plugs a gap in the *Half-Life* market that the original game and its hordes of add-on mods missed. Co-operation itself isn't unique, but the idea of players ganging together to take on the *Half-Life* nasties makes this mod stand out from the crowd. In *Sven Co-op* you won't find yourself up against online human beings, here you're more likely to walk around a corner into a 20ft pissed-off alien monster who can think of nothing better than stamping your sorry human butt into mush. Face crabs and AI soldiers you can deal with on your own, but all too often the enemies are bigger than you and you're going to need help... and lots of it.

As well as the opportunity to fight

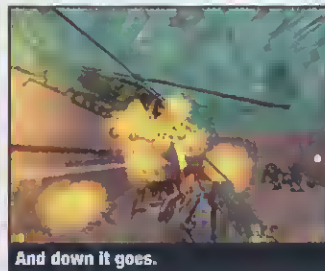
alongside your fellow man in the quest to frag as many aliens as possible, you can select a variety of single-player maps.

Online support is also pretty good, with some 20 or so servers for you to get onto, and author Sven says there's a fab new V2.0 almost with us. Aren't we lucky boys and girls?

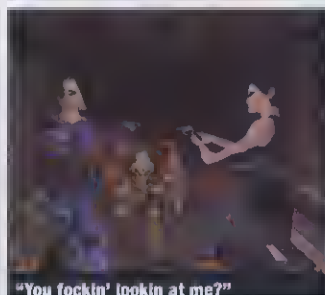
VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Tried and trusted • Fairly popular • Original
↓ **DOWNERS** No killing other players

★★★★★ The simple ideas are quite often the best



And down it goes.



"You fuckin' lookin at me?"

COMING SOON

ANNIHILATION

WWII-themed mods are proving quite popular at the moment, and along with *Day Of Defeat* for *Half-Life* soon we will be enjoying *Annihilation* for *Quake III Arena*. Like *Day Of Defeat*, *Annihilation* will allow players to play as either a light or heavy infantryman, sniper or medic – either for the Allied or German side. New, however, will be a Commander character, voted for by the other players, who can 'do good deeds for the team'. The first beta of *Annihilation* should be available within a couple of months. Find out more from www.planetquake.com/annihilation



X-COM: ENO OF OAYS

In development is a *X-COM* themed *Half-Life* mod, which follows the gameplay set down by *Counter-Strike*, in that as either aliens or *X-Com* agents, players must eliminate the other team. The more kills you get the more money and the better your weapons. Four player models and more than a dozen weapons are planned for the first beta release and it is hoped to include a single-player set of missions at a later date. Find out more from <http://xcom.hlnation.com>



SIN2UT

Having been approved by original *Sin* coders Ritual, we bring you *Sin2UT*, a mod for *Unreal Tournament* that includes weapons, models and maps, either from or inspired by the ageing 30 shooter. There are 11 deathmatch and Capture The Flag maps in the latest release and along with some excellent sound effects, it should certainly do the trick for die-hard *Simmers* waiting for a possible sequel. The mod is on this month's CO. The website is www.planetunreal.com/sin2ut



READERS' CHALLENGE

You wanna polish off *Shoemaker*, chop *Woods* and moider *Korda*? Well here's how...

The first Readers' Free For All was a huge success, with the *CS* server in particular, being packed throughout the night. Thanks to everyone who turned up for a game. We'll announce the result of the first Readers' Challenge vs Clan Fletch next month, along with a review of the second Free For All. Just remember if you can't get on straight away, keep trying. We promise to get as many of you a game as is physically possible.

1 THE CHALLENGE

Pick a game, any game, so long as it's one of these: *Counter-Strike*; *Quake III Arena*; *Quake III Jail Break*; *Quake III Rocket Arena*; *Unreal Tournament*; *Star Trek: Voyager Elite Force*; *Half-Life*; *Virtual Pool 3*; *Age Of Empires II*; *Age Of Kings (4-a-side)*; *C&C: Red Alert 2 (4-a-side)*; *PGA Championship Golf 2000*.

2 THROW DOWN THE GAUNTLET

If your clan is up for a slap and one of you can spell, email us at letters@pczone.co.uk (Subject: *PC ZONE* Readers' Challenge) and depending on the other contenders, you may be in with a chance. In your email include

the name of the game you want to be beaten at, your clan details (website, name), your real names, handles, ages and two of your daytime telephone numbers, so that we can get in touch with you to sort out the details. Don't bother sending in a challenge unless you're certain you'll all be available on the given date and please make sure every team member has access to a machine that allows them to play the chosen game online.



3 CHECK YOUR DIARY

If we like the cut of your gib, we'll get back to you, so make sure your chaps can turn up online on the specified date.

Oh, and if we catch anyone trying to cheat, we'll not only disqualify you but we'll personally come

over and nail your head to your monitor. The next challenge is on Monday April 9,

so fill in those empty diaries and gather your tribe. Don't forget, if you beat us over the course of the game, you'll win a prize.

4 REAP THE REWARDS

If you do win, fairly and squarely and without



APRIL 9

6:30 - 8:30pm

PC ZONE vs CLAN <Evii>

Counter-Strike

9:00 - 11:00pm

FREE-FOR-ALL

Unreal Tournament /Counter-Strike

even the slightest whiff of cheating, we'll give every single member of your team a Razer Boomslang 2000 dpi mouse, worth £69.99 each. Probably the best gaming peripheral in the world, we use them ourselves and know for a fact that they give us an edge over the sort of mouse you're probably using. Which is one of the reasons we'll beat you.

PC ZONE Free-For-All

GETTING CONNECTED

Get ready for some hot fragging action...

No! In the main challenge? You can still get your arses whipped by joining the free-for-all. To get on our *Unreal Tournament* server, click the *Multiplayer* tab in the top left menu and then select *Open Location*. Type in 195.149.48.59:7777 in the box provided, hit *enter* and then when prompted for a password type in *pczone*.

To join the *Counter-Strike* FFA, from the opening *Counter-Strike* menu click *Play CS* then *Internet Games* and then *Filter*. Check the box for *Are In My Favourites List* and uncheck the other boxes.

Now click *Filter* again, and click *Add Server* then type: 195.149.48.59:27016. You should now see a server called "PC ZONE Challenge" listed on your screen. Double click on this server to join it. The password is *pczone*.

Servers will be available for practice from 12pm. Maps will cycle every 15 minutes to allow everyone a chance to play, so keep trying. If you have any problems connecting, telephone 020 7388 0004 on the day of the challenge.

HAVE A GO

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS

Provided by www.games-world.net



The *PC ZONE* game servers are now more popular than ever and to make sure only *PC ZONE* readers can play on them, we've decided to password them all. Don't worry though, every month we'll be printing the password you need to get fragging.

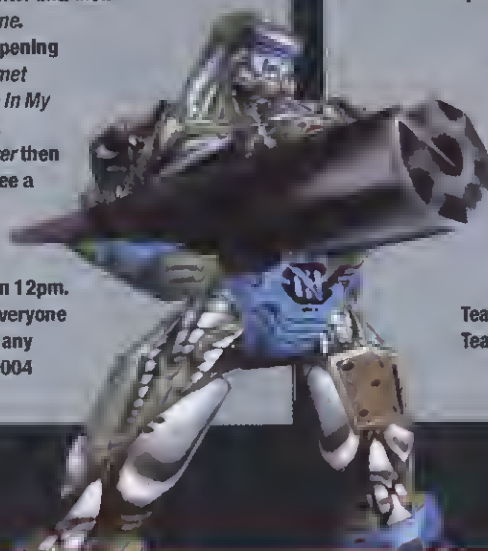
Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24:27966
Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24:27968

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.49:2701S
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.49:27020
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 - 194.93.134.51:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #4 - 194.93.134.51:27020

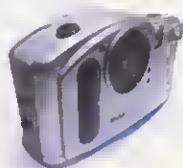
Unreal Tournament #1 - 194.93.134.52:7787
Unreal Tournament #2 - 194.93.134.52:7777

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.50:27015
Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.50:27020

Password: Bilgewater



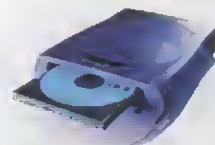
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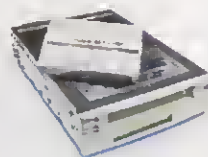
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BUDGET ZONE

Feeling a bit poor this month? Fear not, you're bound to find something here you can afford

★ COUNTING THE COPPERS Martin Korda (*AOE Collectors' Edition*: Rhianna Pratchett, *SIN*: Mark Hill)

AGE OF EMPIRES: COLLECTORS' EDITION

BEST BUY

★ Microsoft • £44.99 • Out now

PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE

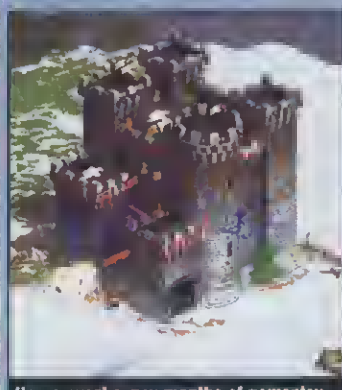
Indulge in more hours of gameplay than is frankly good for you in this month's top budget game, the collectors' edition of the award winning Ensemble titles: *Age Of Empires*, *Age Of Empires: Rise Of Rome*, *Age Of Empires II* and *Age Of Empires II: The Conquerors*.

Relive the glories of the elephant hunting days of the original *Age Of Empires*, then take a firm grasp of your phalanx for a jaunt around Rome in the *Rise Of Rome* expansion pack, after which you can take on 13 new civilisations and do much sheep herding in *Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings*. Finally, you can revel in the joys of 'intelligent' peasants and five new civilisations in *Age Of Kings: The Conquerors*.

If you still haven't had your fill, then all four games have good online sites, from which you can happily mutilate strangers in the comfort of your own home. There's even an *Ages* compilation soundtrack thrown in for good measure. It may not look like a budget game from the price, but for what you get, it's value for money.

PCVERDICT

88%



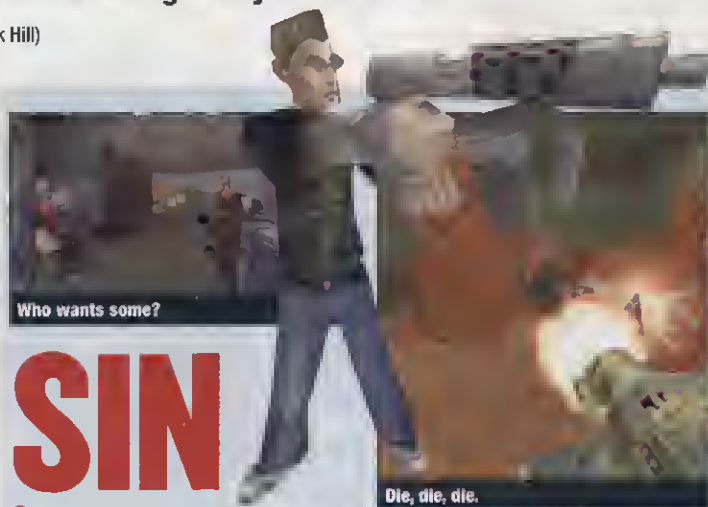
Hours, weeks, nay months of gameplay.



Completing this lot lasts ages.



This compilation is an *Age Of Empires* lover's dream.



Who wants some?

SIN

★ Focus • £9.99 • Out now

SIN took an age to develop and, when it finally arrived was riddled with outrageous bugs. To this day people are still divided into two camps: those who hated it and those who loved it. There are plenty of reasons to dislike it apart from the bugs – the mindless violence and unnecessary misogyny to name a few. But there are more reasons to love it, especially now that it's been all patched up.

Clearly influenced by *Duke Nukem 3D* – slightly bumping up the level of interactivity and the body count – *SIN* has

lots of good ideas and *Final Fantasy*-style subgames – like the helicopter shootout at the beginning. You're constantly surprised and encouraged to carry on by the plot and can't fail to be impressed by the non-linearity of the levels, even if you do always end up in the same place. It may be a shallow experience compared to *Half-Life*, but then again so is every other shooter around.

PCVERDICT

79%



Turn-based gaming at its best.



Looks rubbish, but plays great.

HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC II: THE SUCCESSION WARS

★ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

While it may look terrible, this second instalment of the turn-based *Heroes of Might & Magic* series is a joy to play. It's a brilliantly simplistic, yet hugely addictive turn-based strategy game. Set in a land of goblins, elves and the undead, you must build up a stronghold, defeat enemy armies and send out your heroes to discover new parts of the realm.

As far as turn-based games go, *Heroes* actually manages to make

battles quite exciting, as you get to position your troops before every attack and even select which enemies you want to concentrate your attacks on. If you're a turn-based strategy veteran, you may find it somewhat simplistic, but the rest of you should find that this is precisely what makes it so compelling.

PCVERDICT

73%

Leave him.
He's already
dead.

Your lack of units means stealth is essential.

SHADOW COMPANY: LEFT FOR DEAD

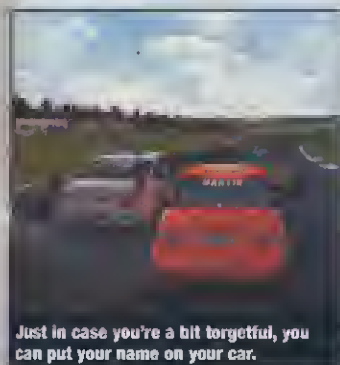
★ Focus • £9.99 • Out now

This 3D strategy game is starting to look decidedly dated, which is hardly surprising since it was released more than a year and a half ago. As the commander of a group of mercenaries, you must embark on a set of covert missions. The lack of units makes stealth more important than brute force and helps set *Shadow Company* apart from other titles.

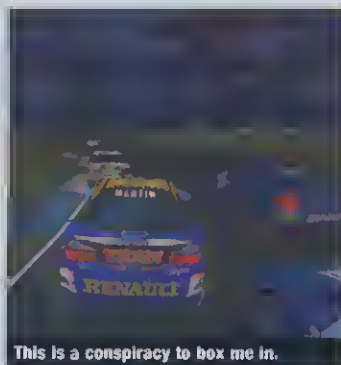
In terms of gameplay, it's incredibly atmospheric and tense, and there's plenty of variation from one mission to the next. While this is all quite gratifying, the whole thing is ruined by some ridiculous bugs and absurd camera angles. *Shadow Company* is a fantastic RTS, but you're only likely to really enjoy it if you're the forgiving type.

PCZ VERDICT

65%



Just in case you're a bit forgetful, you can put your name on your car.



This is a conspiracy to box me in.

TOCA: TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

★ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

While it's no *Colin McRae Rally* (but let's face it what is?) *TOCA: Touring Car Championship* isn't too far behind. And for a fiver it's impossible not to recommend it to any driving simulation fan, as long as you can put up with some blocky visuals.

The cars are incredibly twitchy, so you'll probably find that you spend more time off the track than on it when you first start racing. However, if you're prepared to

persevere then there are endless hours of fun to be had. There are plenty of incentives to keep you racing, as victories will unlock a variety of new cars and circuits. It won't be long before you realise that going round in circles has rarely been so much fun, or as cheap, as it is here.

PCZ VERDICT

75%

SUZUKI ALSTARE EXTREME RACING

★ Focus • £9.99 • Out now

Bike games and the PC have never really hit it off, and *Suzuki Alstare Extreme Racing* was never going to reverse that trend. However, it is pretty intense as the brakes are made pretty much redundant by the fact that you can hurtle round each circuit at virtually full throttle.

As an arcade racer, it just about hits the mark, in that it's totally mindless and

requires little skill other than basic hand/eye coordination. The controls are pretty easy to pick up, but it's highly likely you'll grow bored of *Suzuki* in less time than it takes to uninstall it from your hard drive.

PCZ VERDICT

44%



Brakes are virtually redundant in this game.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN/THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR II ELITE EDITION/ CHICKAMAUGA COMPILATION PACK

★ Xplosiv • £9.99 • Out now

Whatever you do, don't be fooled by this compilation. Despite the misleading screenshot on the back of the box, *Battle Of Britain* is not a tight sim based during the latter part of WWII. It's actually a turn-based strategy game, as are the other two titles in this package.

BOB just about manages to stand out from the other two in terms of quality in this generally poor compilation. *The Operational Art...* is every bit as boring as

the title implies, despite the 25 campaigns on offer. While *Chickamauga* sounds like something Beavis would enthuse when walking past a girls' dorm, the only thing that distinguishes it from the others is that it's based around the American civil war. And yes, in case you were wondering, it's even duller than the other two titles.

PCZ VERDICT

48%



Dull.



Duller.



Dullest.

FEEDBACK

Martin Korda checks out your views on *Alice*, *Delta Force Land Warrior* and *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, *PC Zone*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email them to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with 'Feedback' in the subject line.

DELTA FORCE LAND WARRIOR

REVIEWED *PCZ* #99, Feb 2001
SCORE 69%

What we thought

"If you've got access to a network or are lucky enough to own an ADSL line, then *DFLW* is more than worthy of your time. However, if you're looking for some great single-player action, then be prepared to be more than a little disappointed..."

What you said

★ I read your magazine every month and trust your reviews a great deal. However, I decided to buy *Delta Force Land Warrior* despite its low score.

I am the first to admit that the graphics leave a lot to be desired and the AI is a little suspect. However, the one merit that this game has is that it's incredibly fun to play.

I worked through the campaigns with a real sense of enjoyment, which I hadn't felt since playing *Deus Ex*. The fact that many building

models are used time and time again is a criticism that one could also level at *Project IGI* and, unlike *IGI*, *Delta Force* has some brilliant multiplayer options.

On the whole I don't disagree with your review, I merely feel you were a bit harsh. Wouldn't 75 per cent have been a fairer score?

Alex Hare

★ I bought *DFLW* a couple of weeks ago, mainly for its online options. The *Delta Force* series has never really stood out as a single-player game, and this one is no different. You're right, the landscapes are really dull, the AI is dreadful and everyone you kill seems to either float above the ground or sink into it.

But the multiplayer options are brilliant, and have provided me with many hours of trigger-happy enjoyment. As a single-player game I reckon it deserves about 50 per cent, but as an online one, it's probably pushing 90 per cent, so on balance, 69 per cent was about right.

Phil Barry

Comment

Judging by the sales figures, *DFLW* is selling every bit as well as we thought it would.

However, just because a game carries an established brand name and is therefore guaranteed to sell in droves doesn't mean we'll give it a really high score just for the sake of it. Many of you only buy a few games a year, and in recognition of this, we try to be harsher than most other mags when it comes to scoring, so as to give you the best possible perspective. If we were less stringent, it would be much harder for you to distinguish between a good game and a great game. I'd also like to point out that 69 per cent is by no means a low score.

Last month, we reviewed *DFLW* purely as a multiplayer game in the Online section and gave it a thoroughly deserved tour out of five. It's just a shame the single-player game turned out to be such a disappointment, as it could have been great, had it not been for some unforgivable bugs and a chronic lack of imagination. It would be interesting to know what the rest of you thought of the single-player game. Why not send us your thoughts?



Delta Force Land Warrior is far more entertaining as a multiplayer game.



THPS 2 is simple yet brilliant.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

REVIEWED *PCZ* #98, Jan 2001
SCORE 88%

What we thought

"This is a diamond of a game – it's hard, it's hip, it's original and it's fun. Skate *Tony Hawk's* way and you can't go wrong."

What you said

★ I am a long-time subscriber to *PC ZONE*. I feel that your reviews are usually much more accurate than other magazines' as you are harsher on many hyped games.

A few months ago I wasn't very interested in skateboarding; I had only watched it a couple of times on TV. But then I saw that *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* was on your demo CD, so I installed it straight away. As soon as I got the hang of basic skating (which doesn't take too long, I might add) I was hooked.

I continued to play the demo (becoming a master) until the full game was released in the shops. I immediately bought it and not surprisingly it had the same non-stop gameplay. It's just so satisfying pulling off perfect tricks after all the work of getting the money to buy better stats. There are loads of parks filled with adrenaline-pumping ramps and gaps. As it that isn't enough, you can customise to your heart's content and create your perfect park.

I'm now very interested in skateboarding and watch it every day on Eurosport. In conclusion, this is an addictive game with a long lifespan, which is worth buying even if you're not a fan.

Liam Bennion

★ How you could have given a game in which you do nothing more than perform a few stupid



tricks 88 per cent is totally beyond belief.

Having played the demo, I thought I'd give the full version a miss (my mate has a copy anyway), as it's more of the same, only the parks look a bit different, and you get more skater models to choose from. My friend thinks it's the best game ever, but personally I can't see what's so good about jumping around and doing a couple of circles in the air.

The demo was fun for about the first 20 minutes, but after that it just got too repetitive, and I can't see how that would change in the full game.

Andrew Green

Comment

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 is one of those games that looks pretty ordinary at first, but ends up being one you simply can't stop playing.

Andrew, how you think you can judge it having only played the demo is beyond me. The full version doesn't just offer a few different-looking parks and some different skater models, as Liam quite rightly points out.

It seems that your mate has the right idea about it, and believe me there's a whole lot more to the game than jumping around and doing a couple of circles in the air. Perhaps if you actually learned some tricks instead of spending all your time doing 360-degree turns, you'd get more out of it.

ALICE

REVIEWED PCZ #98, Jan 2001
SCORE 75%

What we thought

"The setting is wondrous but, in gameplay terms, what we have is a formulaic platform romp that is occasionally brilliant and frequently frustrating for all the wrong reasons."

What you said

✪ I thought you were a tiny bit harsh with your review of *Alice* – 80 per cent might have been a bit more accurate. Having played it all the way through, the gameplay isn't samey at all. Each section of the game is quite different, and it all fits together with a nice tidy plot. Some of

and, being a fan of all things Tim Burtonesque, I may be somewhat biased.

However, it did strike me that Paul Mallinson came across a particularly tough game and only gave it a cursory glance. What evidence do I have for that?

Well, one of your downers for the game said: "Some weapons

"The one thing that lets this game down is replayability – as thrilling and exciting as it is, it doesn't have any"

ALEX WASHTELL ON ALICE

the later levels just amazed me with their detail, in particular the clock tower levels.

Your review of the weapons was a bit weak; you didn't explain most of them properly at all. Remember that each weapon has two different fire modes. The Ice Wand is used to freeze enemies, while the Eye Staff – one of the best weapons in the game – fires an intense charged-up beam. The Demon Dice are supposed to be thrown when you see a Pentangle on the ground. When thrown, a portal opens up, allowing a creature from hell out to help you battle some enemies (and he'll even turn on you if you're not careful). Incidentally, the Mallet fires hedgehogs, not bolts, but I guess you have to know the *Alice in Wonderland* story to understand that.

The one thing that lets this game down is the replayability factor, as I don't think it has any. I think it'll be a long time before I play through this game again, as thrilling and exciting as it is.

Alex Washtell

✪ Having recently completed *American McGee's Alice*, I have to say that I thought your review was somewhat harsh. I will admit that I thought the twisted vision of Wonderland was astounding

Caterpillar boss. It is, therefore, not "a waste of a weapon slot".

3 You couldn't get the Demon Dice to work? Per-lease. The

Demon Dice either (depending on your location in Wonderland) summon a demon – particularly useful if there are several enemies around – or produce a smoke screen. The demon-summoning works in the room immediately after you find the dice, satisfyingly taking care of several card guards.

I admit that the puzzles, as you pointed out, are very much of the 'pull the lever' variety (at least they're not oversized keys), but that is balanced out by the fact that you're constantly fighting very deadly enemies.

I didn't find the voice acting as irritating as you seemed to but, yes, playing the same bit of a level 20 times is annoying – however, that is what game saves are for.

You compared *Alice* to *The Nomad Soul* – a game I also thoroughly enjoyed. Not a single part of the game seemed in the least bit rushed, however, the last section of *The Nomad Soul* did feel as though the programmers had either

run out of ideas or were just in a hurry to finish.

In my opinion, the game deserved 80 per cent, but as I said earlier, I might be a little biased.

Andy Boylan

Comment

Alice is undoubtedly a game featuring some fantastic ideas. However, as Mallo pointed out in his review, it's very much a dressed-up action/adventure, with often samey gameplay and irritating sections, which you have to replay countless times.

In our defence, the reason the weapons weren't covered in as much detail as they could have been was because on occasions we're forced to review from gold masters, without the aid of a manual. Which is what happened here, so Mallo had to work out the function of each weapon all on his own. As a result it's possible he missed out the odd fact.

Thanks to both Alex and Andy for filling in the blanks, and no doubt Mallo will soon be sending you a share of the money we paid him for the review, for your invaluable contributions. [X]





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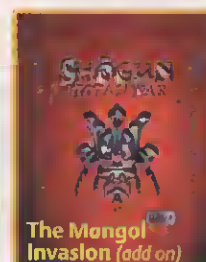
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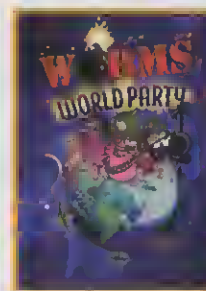
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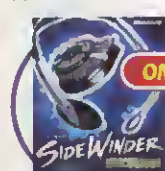


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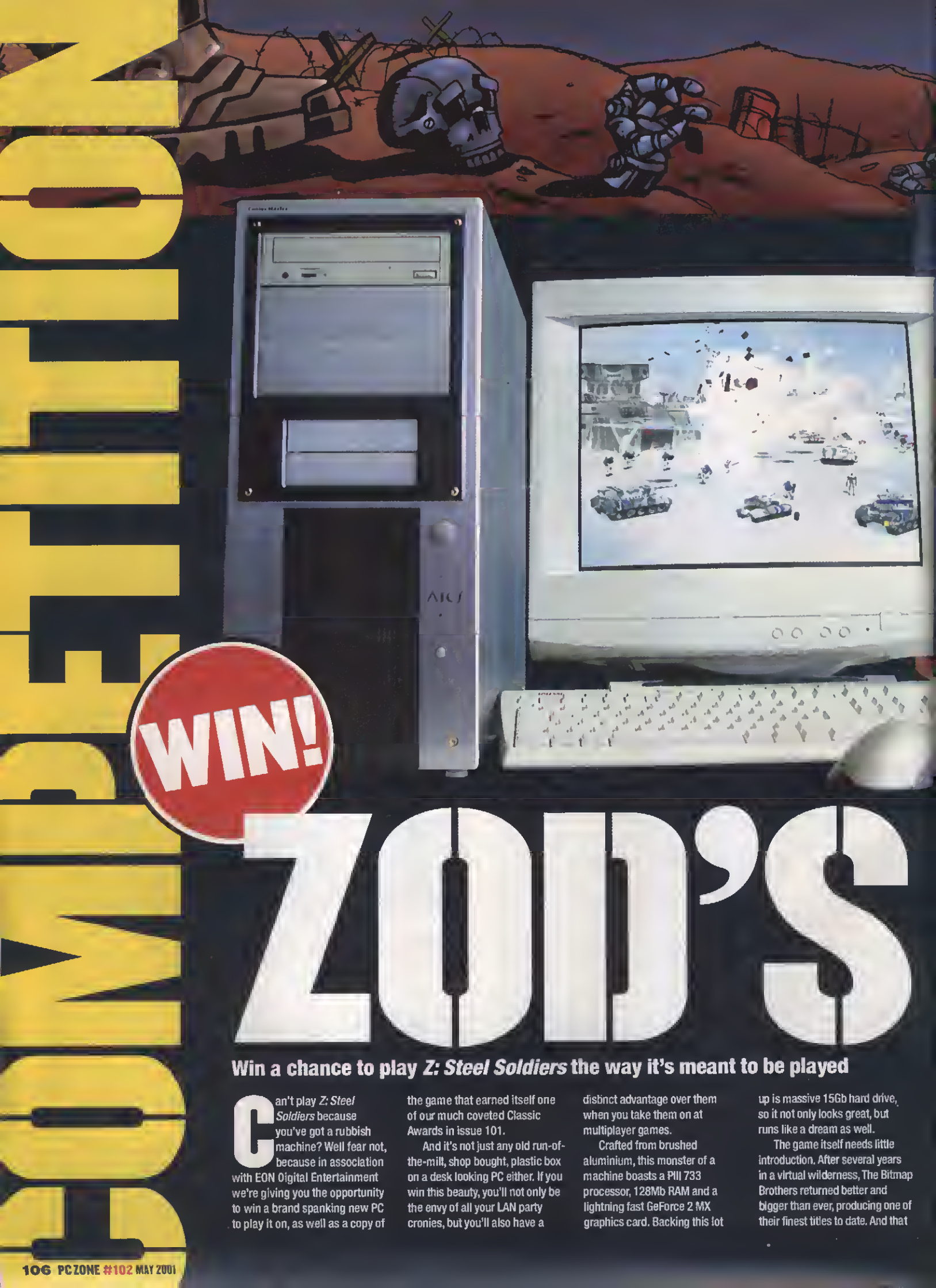
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WIN!

ZOID'S

Win a chance to play *Z: Steel Soldiers* the way it's meant to be played

Can't play *Z: Steel Soldiers* because you've got a rubbish machine? Well fear not, because in association with EON Digital Entertainment we're giving you the opportunity to win a brand spanking new PC to play it on, as well as a copy of

the game that earned itself one of our much coveted Classic Awards in issue 101.

And it's not just any old run-of-the-mill, shop bought, plastic box on a desk looking PC either. If you win this beauty, you'll not only be the envy of all your LAN party cronies, but you'll also have a

distinct advantage over them when you take them on at multiplayer games.

Crafted from brushed aluminium, this monster of a machine boasts a PIII 733 processor, 128Mb RAM and a lightning fast GeForce 2 MX graphics card. Backing this lot

up is massive 15Gb hard drive, so it not only looks great, but runs like a dream as well.

The game itself needs little introduction. After several years in a virtual wilderness, The Bitnap Brothers returned better and bigger than ever, producing one of their finest titles to date. And that



PC

was never going to be easy for the team that was responsible for classics such as *Speedball* and *Xenon*. *Z: Steel Soldiers* is one of the most thrilling and action-packed RTS games ever, and with its superb multiplayer options, its frenzied action will no doubt keep you occupied for months on end.

All you have to do for a chance of winning these fabulous prizes is read the question below and work out the answer. Once you've done this, grab a postcard and a pen, scribble down what you think constitutes the right reply, along with your name, address,

email address, telephone number and bank details (only joking) and send it to us at: Z: Steel Soldiers Compo (CPCZ0105b), PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 5FF. The closing date is May 2 2001.

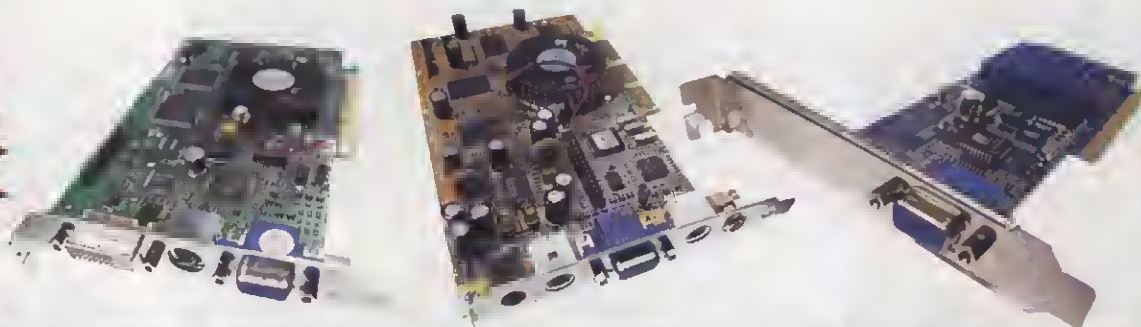
QUESTION: What are the soldiers in Z2 made of?

- 1** Paper
- 2** Coriander
- 3** Steel
- 4** Don't know
- 5** What's a soldier?

☛ **Terms and conditions:** Only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No

correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!

**3D CARD
ROUND-UP**
THE NEW GENERATION



HOUSE OF

Both the price and performance of graphics cards have rocketed. *Tim Ponting* puts the latest through their paces

It's a well-known observation that computer processors double in power every 18 to 24 months. This principle is known as Moore's Law, named after one of Intel's founders, Gordon Moore. At the recent launch of GeForce3 in Paris, NVIDIA proudly announced that its graphics processors or 'GPUs' had been advancing at a rate of

Moore's Law cubed. While CPUs have remained in a similar pricing ballpark as they've progressed, Moore's Law cubed has led to a new principle – that of 'triple the price'. In the 3D accelerator world, this is widely known as Sod's Law.

Though prices may have rocketed, frame rates have enjoyed an equally meteoric rise. The purpose of this article is to take a cross

section of the 3D cards on sale and compare their performance and feature sets in the cold light of day (or in my case, by the light of a candle, running more benchmarks than you lot have had hot bloody baths). And at the end of it, to make recommendations based on the size of your wallet.

It seems there's never a right time to round up 3D accelerators for comparison.

We thought this time we'd got our timing spot on, but then at the last minute NVIDIA's brand-spanking new GeForce 3 was 'held back' for driver tweaking. So you'll have to make do with a preview of its features now we've seen it in action, and hang on for a full review next month (any reviews you see elsewhere – don't take too much notice, people). We'll use

HERCULES 3D PROPHET DDR/DVI

★ £175 (inc VAT) • Guillemot • (020) 8686 5600 • www.hercules-uk.com

The first card out of the starting blocks also happens to carry the oldest chipset, NVIDIA's first-generation

GeForce 256 GPU, in this case married to 32Mb DDR (Double Data Rate) memory.

Although it's longish in the tooth, GeForce 256 can still hold its head comparatively high, even in this elevated company. The GPU sports NVIDIA's first-generation hardware T&L (Transform and Lighting) engine, but the benchmarks clearly show its prowess alongside the second-generation, but emasculated, GeForce2 MX chipset, beating it in every category.

In common with each card tested, no gamer will grumble about its performance in resolutions up to 1024x768. Even in 32-bit colour with trilinear filtering and max quality switched on in our *Quake III* test, frame rates were steadily in excess of 65fps (frames per second). Though heavier scenes with more

'overdraw' (hidden polygons behind the visible ones that still have to be calculated and textured, despite the fact they never get seen) will slow it down, most *Arena* players will eke 40-plus fps at this resolution.

Direct3D performance is also solid across the board, though its 32-bit performance in games that don't support hardware T&L is marginally worse than the vastly cheaper VideoLogic Vivid!. However, with hardware T&L in full effect, no one can grumble, especially in 16-bit colour where it even exceeds the performance of ATI Radeon cards.

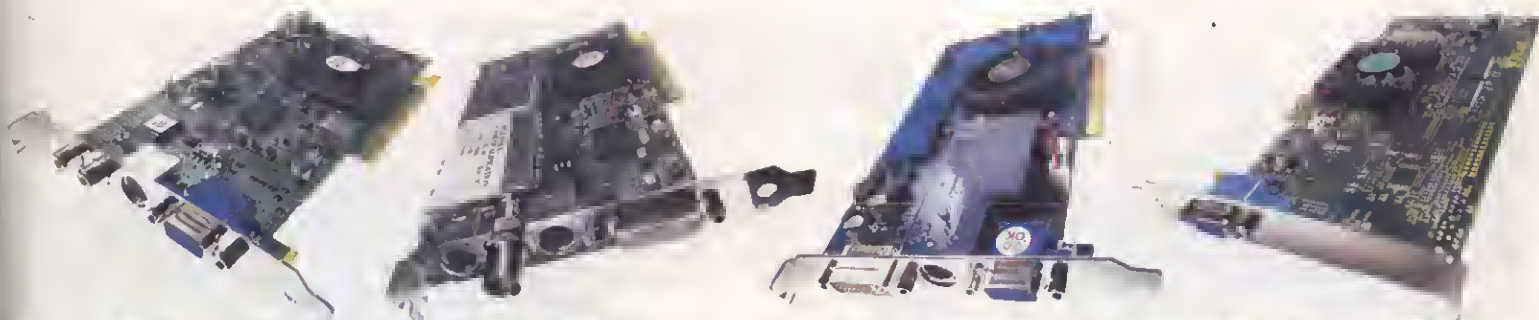
One caveat – these cards are notoriously demanding in terms of power consumption, and if you run them alongside a first-generation Athlon chip you may find this a major problem. I did!

PC2VERDICT

61%



© It may not be the latest, but could it still be the greatest?



3D CARDS

exactly the same benchmarks in our review next month, which will give you a perfect comparison.

On the bright side, we got new drivers for VideoLogic's Vivid!, some 'unsupported' upgraded code for the Radeon cards and a smaller tweak to the NVIDIA's Detonator engine.

The cards tested are from just three

processor stables: NVIDIA (four boards), ATI (two) and ST Microelectronics (one). We've left 3dfx out of the equation because NVIDIA has acquired 3dfx's intellectual property and these babies are most certainly from yesterday's lunchbox.

Matrox is still just about hanging in there with the 400 series, but this is clearly now aimed at the business

market rather than at gamers. We've spared it the embarrassment of comparison, despite the fact it was state of the art in terms of image quality at the time of its release.

While ATI and only ATI makes cards utilising its own chips, NVIDIA and ST provide the silicon for others to build upon. Hercules supplies three cards, Asus a

fourth and VideoLogic the last. While there are many differences between cards from different manufacturers based on the same chipsets, these tend to be in terms of their peripheral features, such as TV-Out. So in the case of the NVIDIA-based boards in particular, the performance results should be similar for cards based on the same chip but made by someone else.

ASUS AGP-V7700 DELUXE

★ £322 (inc VAT) • Taxan UK • (01344) 867 646 • www.asus.com

Check out the features on this baby in the comparison table on page 112 – Asus rightly gives this card the 'Deluxe' moniker, laden to the gills as it is with multimedia-friendly features. Based on the GeForce2 GTS chipset, the V7700 has all the features of the 'proper' GeForce2 range (shared by the GTS, Pro and Ultra), such as quad-pixel pipelines, but with marginally lower memory and/or core speeds (and price) than its Pro and Ultra siblings.

With prices in the region of £290 for plain 64Mb cards, GTS cards certainly don't come cheap. Under Direct3D, games that don't support hardware T&L run marginally faster in 16-bit on a GTS than they do on any (admittedly far cheaper) Radeon cards, though they slip behind in the 32-bit stakes where Radeon excels. The 16-bit fillrates are also fabulous, so if you're not

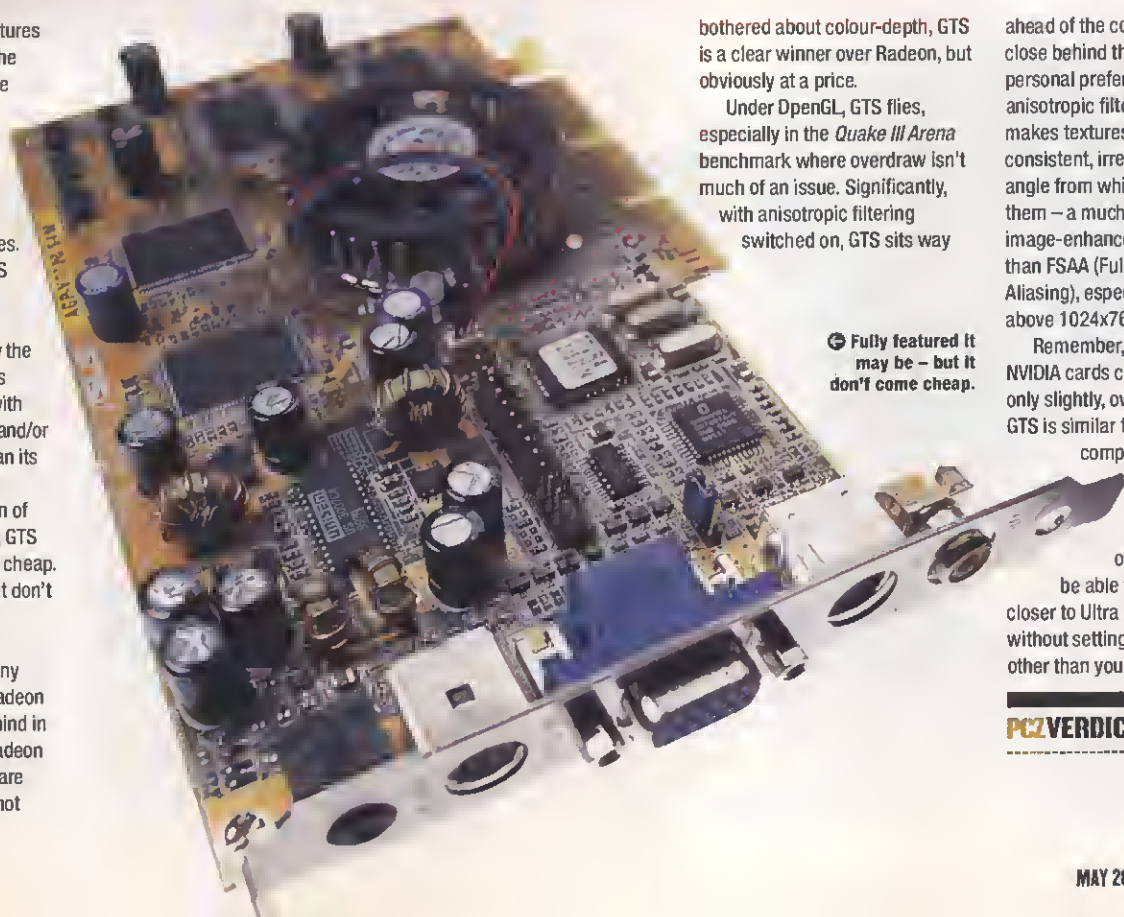
bothered about colour-depth, GTS is a clear winner over Radeon, but obviously at a price.

Under OpenGL, GTS flies, especially in the *Quake III Arena* benchmark where overdraw isn't much of an issue. Significantly, with anisotropic filtering switched on, GTS sits way

ahead of the competition, and is close behind the Ultra. It's a personal preference, but I find anisotropic filtering – which makes textures look more consistent, irrespective of the angle from which you're viewing them – a much more compelling image-enhancement technique than FSAA (Full Screen Anti-Aliasing), especially at resolutions above 1024x768.

Remember, too, that many NVIDIA cards can be reliably, if only slightly, overclocked – and a GTS is similar to an Ultra but with components rated at slower clock speeds. As long as you don't overdo it, you may be able to tweak a GTS closer to Ultra performance without setting fire to anything other than your frame rates.

☛ Fully featured it may be – but it don't come cheap.



PC2VERDICT

70%

HERCULES 3D PROPHET II MX

★ £102 (inc VAT) • Guillemot • (020) 8686 5600 • www.hercules-uk.com

It was in the nick of time that NVIDIA cast a backwards glance at the budget end of the 3D accelerator market and realised that it

would shortly be unable to compete on either price or performance in this sector. TNT2, while a fabulous product, lacked the muscle to compete with new arrivals, especially the Kryo chipset from ST Microelectronics and Radeon from ATI, which many expected to come in at a lower price point than it finally settled at.

MX utilises the same GeForce2 technology as its grander siblings, but trades four-pixel pipelines for two – still very efficient for twin-texture games such as *Quake III Arena*. And as it's based on the same advanced manufacturing techniques as other GeForce2 GPUs, MX chips run very cool and draw little power thanks to the lower

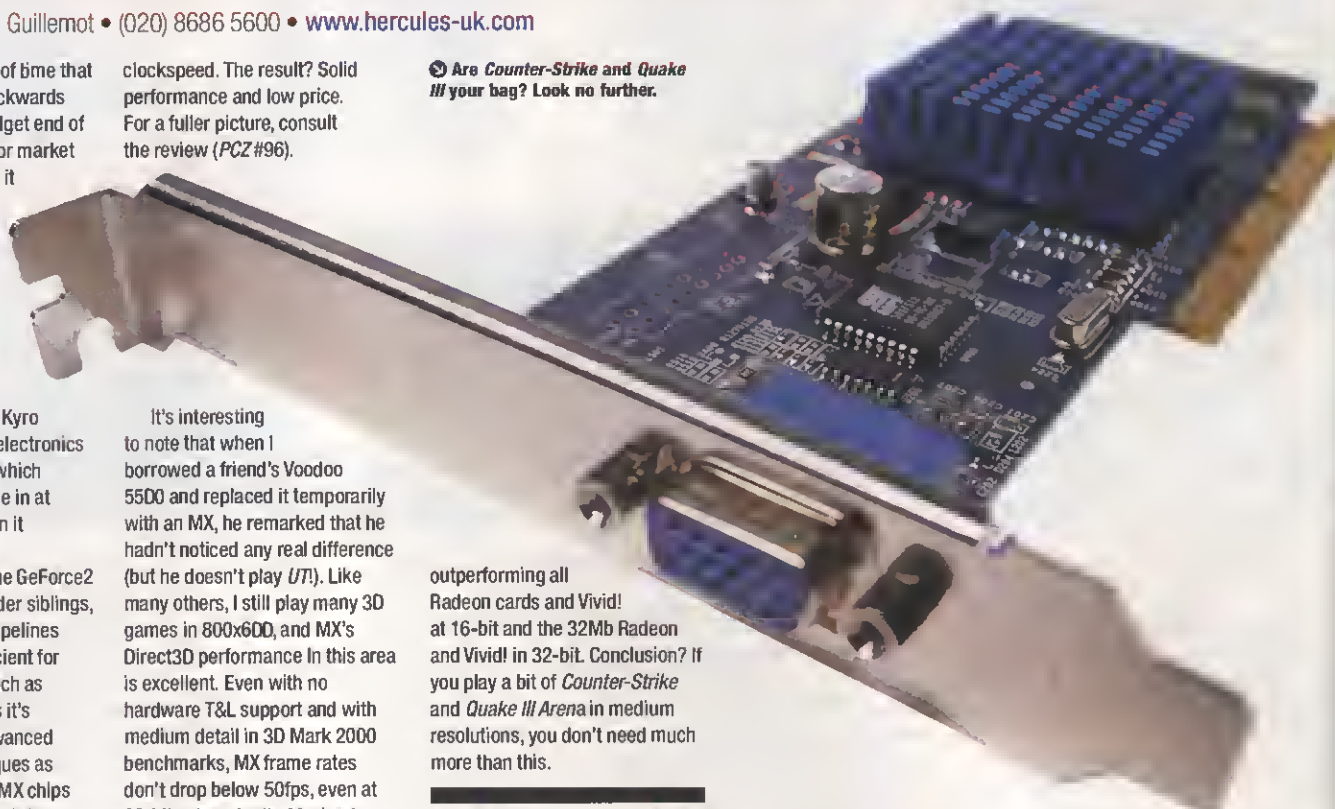
clockspeed. The result? Solid performance and low price. For a fuller picture, consult the review (PCZ #96).

It's interesting to note that when I borrowed a friend's Voodoo 5500 and replaced it temporarily with an MX, he remarked that he hadn't noticed any real difference (but he doesn't play *UT*). Like many others, I still play many 3D games in 800x600, and MX's Direct3D performance in this area is excellent. Even with no hardware T&L support and with medium detail in 3D Mark 2000 benchmarks, MX frame rates don't drop below 50fps, even at 32-bit colour depth. Moving to OpenGL, MX performs excellently,

Are *Counter-Strike* and *Quake III* your bag? Look no further.

outperforming all Radeon cards and Vivid! at 16-bit and the 32Mb Radeon and Vivid! in 32-bit. Conclusion? If you play a bit of *Counter-Strike* and *Quake III Arena* in medium resolutions, you don't need much more than this.

PCZVERDICT 84%



ATI RADEON 64MB DDR

★ £180 (inc VAT) • ATI Technologies • (01628) 477 788 • www.ati.com

As the leader in the desktop graphics marketplace, ATI had an awful lot to lose during the inexorable rise of NVIDIA, and like 3dfx, ended up being rabbit-punched from behind. Its response has come in the form of Radeon, the much-vaunted

aren't quite as rosy as they seemed to be at launch.

However, Radeon is no also-ran. Check out the review (PCZ #98) for the full low-down on its clever technical features – this is certainly a step ahead of GeForce2

competitor to the mid-range GeForce2 cards.

On arrival, the Radeon took an early lead, but ATI hadn't counted on the release of the aptly named Detonator 3 drivers from NVIDIA, which overnight seized the performance lead back. Couple this with some hateful, albeit rare, installation problems that still blight Radeon (it took us eight hours and a phone call to tech support in Ireland to get the buggers working), and things

in many ways. In particular, note its top-notch performance in 32-bit colour in Direct3D, arguably the most important gaming arena today. In 32-bit, its hardware T&L engine clearly leapfrogs that of GeForce 256 and GF2 MX. But even more significantly, in games

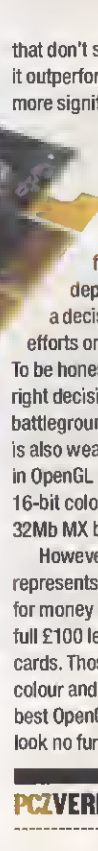
that don't support hardware T&L it outperforms both by an even more significant margin – in

higher resolutions edging GeForce 256's hardware T&L engine! On the other hand, you can forget Radeon in 16-bit depths – ATI clearly made a decision to centre its efforts on 32-bit operation.

To be honest, I think this is the right decision, since 16-bit is the battleground of yesterday. Radeon is also weaker than NVIDIA cards in OpenGL modes, especially in 16-bit colour where even the 32Mb MX beat it.

However, the ATI Radeon represents excellent value for money given that it costs a full £100 less than most GTS cards. Those who play in 32-bit colour and can live without the best OpenGL performance should look no further.

Great value for money, as long as OpenGL isn't your top priority.



PCZVERDICT 81%

ALL-IN-WONDER RADEON

★ £238 (inc VAT) • ATI • (01628) 477 788 • www.ati.com

It may seem strange that a 32Mb card should cost more than its 64Mb sibling, but in this case, ATI has loaded the board to the gunwales with multimedia stuff.

First of all, the card has a single DVI output – to connect to a standard monitor, you need to use the DVI-VGA conversion plug supplied. Video input is handled by a cool blue 'breakout box', which carries S-Video, Composite Video and twin audio connections. Output is via a rather less cool wiring loom – S-Video out is accompanied by composite video, a stereo audio out utilising a mini-jack and an S/P-DIF digital audio output.

As well as video connections, there's a fully featured TV tuner built into the card. This allows you to record telly progs onto your hard drive in MPEG-2 format (same as DVD, but obviously encoded in real time so poorer quality). It can even pause TV in its tracks – when you resume, it plays back material it has

buffered onto disk. Incidentally, Radeon's DVD playback credentials are excellent, too.

The All-In-Wonder Radeon is clocked slightly slower (166MHz) than the 64Mb version at 183MHz. This only has a slight effect on the performance figures, which are broadly similar. The card excels in 32-bit depths and achieves excellent results in Direct3D benchmarks across the board. In the crucial 1024x768 resolution, 3D Mark 2000's helicopter and adventure benchmarks (medium detail level) both exhibited frame rates above 50fps – and with software T&L as well. *Counter-Strike* – which doesn't support hardware T&L – will certainly run well on this card.

In addition, in 16-bit colour, frame rates of around 40fps are possible with high-quality FSAA turned on in 800x600. Personally, I'd rather just display a higher resolution...

PC2VERDICT 76%



Ⓢ Excellent performance in Direct3D and at 32-bit.

HERCULES 3D PROPHET II ULTRA

★ £390 (inc VAT) • Guillemot • (020) 8686 5600 • www.hercules-uk.com

The ultimate incarnation of NVIDIA's GeForce2 chipset is the Ultra. The core runs at a whopping 250MHz, coupled to memory rated at 230MHz (effectively 460MHz DDR). The card runs very hot as a result – a hefty fan assembly cools the GPU, while even the memory carries heatsinks!

As a result, the card both thinks and moves data around at stunningly fast speeds – and the benchmarks show it, both under OpenGL and Direct3D. Even set to high detail, 3D Mark 2000's games tests were devoured by Ultra – at 1280x1024 resolution, frame rates averaged nearly 50fps with hardware T&L support, more than twice that of MX.

Under OpenGL, the card has no peer. For example, at 1024x768 in 32-bit colour, with moderate FSAA and anisotropic filtering active, frame rates remain around the 50 mark. Ultra even managed to hit the same figure at a resolution of 1600x1200 in 32-bit colour

without the additional features activated. Ultra's performance in games with no support for hardware T&L is equally impressive, outperforming both MX and GF256's hardware assisted figures. *Counter-Strike* will never be the same again on lesser cards...

Of course, all this performance comes at a price – if you stick your nose in the online trough you can pick a card up for £370, but this is still a full £175 more than a 64Mb Radeon. Is it worth the price? Also, bear in mind that Ultra will drop in price when cards based on GeForce3 start selling in numbers. Wait a month or two, we reckon, but if the ultimate performance is what you're looking for, Ultra will remain a good card for a while to come.

PC2VERDICT 78%

Ⓢ The priciest of all the cards reviewed, but expect a price drop in the near future.



VIVID!

★ £95 (inc VAT) • VideoLogic
(01923) 277488
• www.videologic.com

It was an age before we reviewed this card as we felt the drivers weren't good enough. We finally took the plunge last issue and, ironically, new drivers appeared just after we went to press. And having given VideoLogic the benefit of the doubt, we're quite glad we didn't end up with egg on our faces.

The chipset used by this card is from little-lauded but undeniably massive semiconductor manufacturer ST Microelectronics. We like Kryo because it applies technology so intelligently, using tile-based rendering to minimise unnecessary bandwidth hogging and reducing the effects of overdraw noticeable with NVIDIA cards in complex games. For the full lowdown, check out the

review (PCZ #101), but to encapsulate the advantages in a sentence, Vivid! can use cheaper components to render the same scene at a comparable frame rate as 'faster' cards, with the benefits passed on to the end user as a cheaper product.

To stress a point that I forgot to make in the last review (thanks to Sgt. Chimp in the ZONE website forum for pointing this out), Vivid! is the only card here that doesn't support hardware transform and lighting. As such, Radeon and GeForce spank Vivid! In games supporting hardware T&L. However, Vivid! seems to perform

exceptionally well at low-to-mid resolutions in 16-bit colour with software T&L alone – at 800x600, it cooks up a storm. Since I play *Counter-Strike* at this resolution, this suits me just fine.

Like Radeon, the Kryo chipset also features support for several advanced 'quality' oriented features, such as environmentally mapped bump mapping. Though we'd like to slap developers around the head for not supporting this feature as standard, it is beginning to filter through in recent games. It makes an enormous difference to texture mapping – just sit and watch the 3D Mark 2000 benchmark to understand exactly why.

PCZ VERDICT

85%

A PIECE OF THE ACTION

How the cards fared in our benchmark tests

We used MadDont's excellent 3D Mark 2000 for Direct3D benchmarking and *Quake III Arena* timedemo (Demo001) for OpenGL. In Direct3D, we also ran tests for software and hardware T&L, so you can see how cards stack up in games that don't support H/W T&L as well as in games that do.

Kryo wasn't happy at 1280x1024 in 32-bit colour, hence the missing bar.

Remember, all a benchmark tells you is how a product performs in that benchmark under test conditions – it's not the be-all and end-all. The test machine was a 1GHz Athlon, VIA KT133 chipset running 4.28v driver set, and 256Mb PC100 RAM, and we used a clean Windows install for each card.

GEFORCE3: DIRECTX 8 AHoy!

Though NVIDIA isn't happy to release boards for review yet, we've got the full mouthwatering details of this new card. It really is a leap forward, far more so than GeForce2 over GeForce256.

There's no room here to give the full picture, so watch out for the full review soon. GeForce3 features a new

infiniteFX engine, consisting of Vertex and Pixel Shading Instruction Sets. This basically allows developers to access a new low-level instruction set on the GPU itself to create their own effects palette – no longer are they limited to a set of hard-coded hardware features. Explaining how it works causes spontaneous brain meltdown in normal humans, so we'll restrict ourselves to what can be achieved. For example, using the Vertex Processor, a polygonal shape can be morphed in real time by the GPU – so a face can be made to smile, a pond to ripple or a cloak to flap, just using the GPU instruction set. Skinning joints (a feature of Radeon) can be achieved using the same technology – meaning you can bend joints without seeing gaps as the shapes move past each other.

The Pixel Processor allows complex shadowing and reflective bump mapping for ultra-realistic textures – for example, you can actually make real-looking fur. And remember, it's the GPU that's taxed by this, not your CPU.

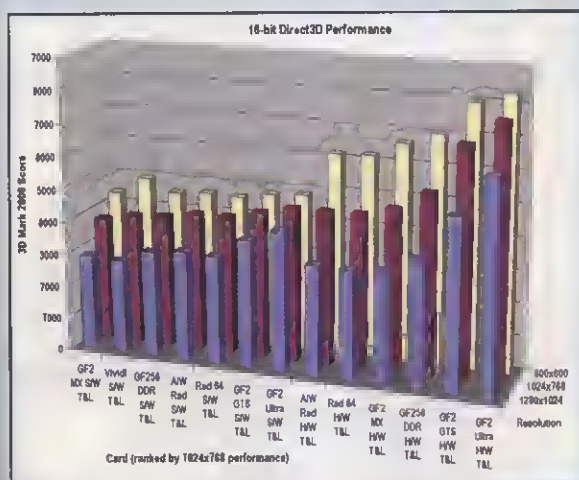
Developers are wetting themselves – Microsoft even

KNOW YOUR MICRONS FROM YOUR MEGAHERTZ

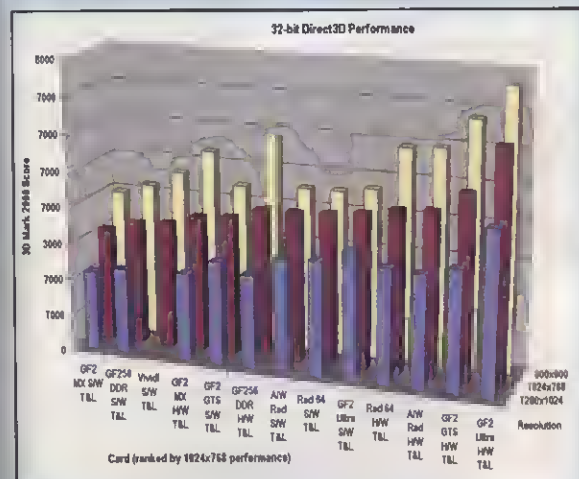
Crucial info on the all the cards reviewed here – plus a couple of sneak previews

Here are a selection of 'stats' about the cards reviewed, plus a sneak preview of GeForce3 and Kryo II. Please leaf through back issues for fuller details of the individual cards' technologies – there's so much we couldn't fit in, it would be impossible to make an informed decision on the basis of this table alone.

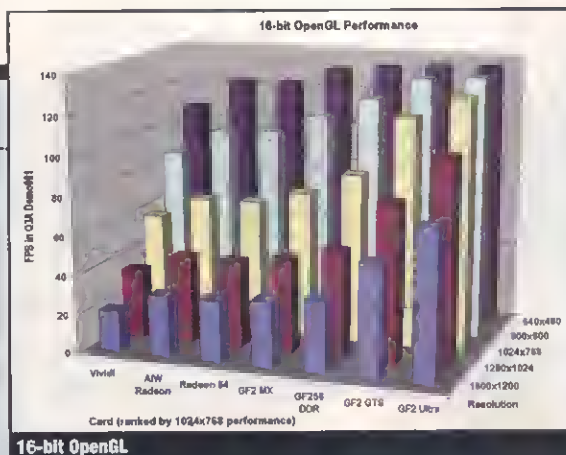
Manufacturer	ATI Technologies	ATI Technologies	Hercules	Hercules	Asus	Hercules
Card name	All-In-Wonder Radeon	Radeon 64Mb DDR	3D Prophet DDR/DVI	3D Prophet II MX	AGP-V7700 Deluxe	3D Prophet II Ultra
Memory	32Mb	64Mb	32Mb	32Mb	64Mb	64Mb
Memory type	DDR	DDR	DDR	DDR	DDR	DDR
Chipset	Radeon	Radeon	GeForce 256	GeForce2 MX	GeForce2	GeForce2
Driver	4.12.3056	4.12.3056	Detonator 3.650	Detonator 3.650	Detonator 3.650	Detonator 3.650
Manufacturing process	0.18 micron	0.18 micron	0.25 micron	0.18 micron	0.18 micron	0.18 micron
Default core clockspeed	166MHz	183MHz	120MHz	175MHz	200MHz	250MHz
Memory clockspeed	166MHz (333MHz DDR)	183MHz (366MHz DDR)	150MHz (300MHz DDR)	183MHz (366MHz DDR)	166MHz (333MHz DDR)	230MHz (460MHz DDR)
AGP	4x	4x	4x	4x	4x	4x
No of rendering pipelines/ texture units per pipeline	2/3	2/3	4/1	2/2	4/2	4/2
Hardware T&L	2nd Gen	2nd Gen	1st Gen	2nd Gen	2nd Gen	2nd Gen
Z-Buffer technique	Hyper-Z	Hyper-Z	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
Multimedia features	TV in, S-Video in/out, composite video in/out, stereo audio in/out, S/P-DIF out	Composite video in/out, S-Video out	S-Video out	—	S-Video in/out, composite video in/out, VR Glasses output	S-Video out
Monitor outputs	VGA/DVI	VGA	VGA/DVI	VGA	VGA	VGA/DVI
Street price	238	180	175	102	322	390



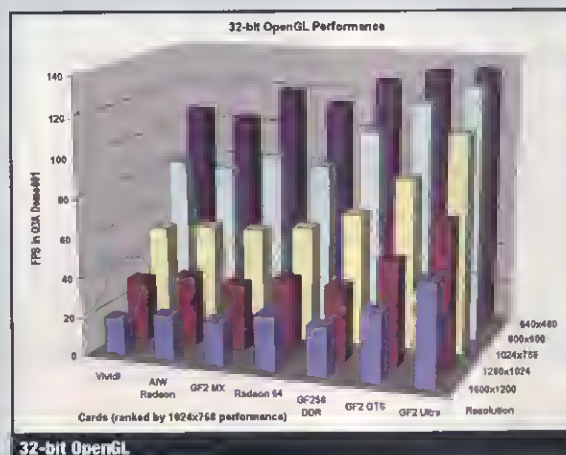
16-bit D3D



32-bit D3D



16-bit OpenGL



32-bit OpenGL

licensed the technology for DirectX 8. But this is the downside – there was an inevitable delay between hardware T&L becoming available to developers and its appearance in games. I talked to Rage at the GeForce3 launch, and was told that

infiniteFX-savvy games weren't a magnitude harder to program – but there will be a delay. Maybe we should all wait for them to appear before shelling out £400 on a card. But when these features arrive, prepare to lose your socks in a spontaneous blast.

CONCLUSION

As ever, it's tricky to draw definitive conclusions when there are so many factors involved. However, it's undeniable that NVIDIA GTS-based cards are definitely on the pricey side at the moment.

If you're lucky enough not to have installation problems, ATI's Radeon family is looking increasingly strong in the £150 to £200 price bracket, though the Bela drivers we tested showed no performance gain over the release drivers shown in the benchmark charts. Check compatibility before you buy, but with that caveat a Radeon 64MB DDR makes good sense. Radeon sports all the important

“As developers increasingly render overdrawn scenes, Kyro's performance will stay level while MX drops away”

technologies (hardware T&L, high-quality anisotropic filtering, Hyper-Z to reduce bandwidth limitations) and has excellent 32-bit performance. We like.

It hardly seems fair to describe either Vivid! or GeForce MX as 'low end', but in this company they are. There's little to divide the two in real-life conditions – if your favourite games support hardware T&L, MX edges ahead; if you're into 32-bit colour and T&L isn't as important, and you like the image-quality features of Kyro such as Environmentally Mapped Bump Mapping, it's the better choice. Also, Kyro is that little bit cheaper and as game developers seem increasingly to be rendering overdrawn scenes, its performance is going to stay level as MX drops away. What is undeniable, however, is that Kyro II (included in the feature table for comparison) seems likely to blow MX away.

At the high end, Ultra dominates. Its huge memory bandwidth allows it to outperform all-comers. It's expensive, but some cheaper Ultras can be found online for less than £300 if you hunt carefully. GeForce3 will be reviewed soon, but as its features are unlikely to be supported for a while, I'd stick with the cheaper Ultra for the time being.

And now, chaps, I'm going to bed. And I never want to see a video card ever again. Until next time... ☹

VideoLogic	NVIDIA	ST Microelectronics
Vivid! 32Mb	GeForce3	Kyro II
32Mb	64Mb	64Mb
SDR	DDR	SDR
Kyro	GeForce3	Kyro II
1.0.5.115	—	—
0.25 micron	0.15 micron	0.18 micron
115MHz	200MHz	175MHz
115MHz (115MHz SDR)	230MHz (460MHz DDR)	175MHz (175MHz SDR)
4x	4x	4x
2/2	4/2-4	2/2
No	3rd Gen	No
Tile-based	Z-Compression/Occlusion Culling	Tile-based
—	N/A	N/A
VGA	N/A	N/A
95	Around 420	Around £100

No of rendering pipelines/texture units per pipeline: GeForce2 has four pipelines that can render two pixels in each pass – ideal for twin-texture games such as *Quake III Arena*. Radeon has just two pipelines, like MX, but as ATI is quick to point out, it's much more efficient at processing triple-texture games, which require an extra pass through an NVIDIA card. Both cards have sophisticated per-pixel engines (NVIDIA Shading Rasteriser or NSR and Pixel Tapestry respectively). Visit www.nvidia.com and www.ati.com for the full skinny. GeForce3 can actually render four textures per pass, but requires an additional clock cycle to achieve this – a clever compromise, hence it's listed as '4/2-4'.

Hardware T&L: ATI is listed as second generation, as its performance is comparable to NVIDIA second-generation T&L.

GeForce3 actually adds a great deal of extra programmability to its T&L function, hence listed as third gen.

Z-Buffer technique: most 3D cards use 'Immediate' rendering where every pixel in a complex scene is calculated and textured, whether behind other objects or not, giving rise to 'overdraw'. This is labelled 'Standard'. Radeon uses various techniques collectively called Hyper-Z to reduce the amount of bandwidth devoured by overdraw. Kyro uses the clever PowerVR technique known as tile-based rendering, where only visible pixels are rendered, removing overdraw problems completely. GeForce3 uses a new set of techniques similar to Hyper-Z to reduce the effects of overdraw.

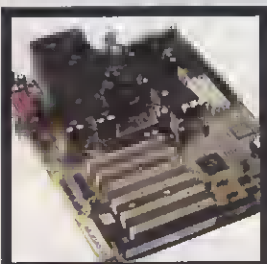
Drivers: we also tested ATI unsupported driver 4.13.7072, but the results were almost identical to those with 4.12.3056.

BUYER'S GUIDE

As promised, this section will be updated every issue – this month we have been mostly looking at gamepads, headphones and 19in monitors. And just in case you hadn't noticed, now is the time to buy memory – we just popped 512Mb in our 1GHz Athlon (see below) for £154, including VAT and delivery

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY



ABIT KT-7A RAID
STREET PRICE £150, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Abit
TELEPHONE (01438) 741999 **WEBSITE** www.abit.nl/english

Back in our Christmas Upgrade feature, we recommended the KT-7 RAID from Abit. Since then, there's been an upgrade to the KT-7A RAID. This adds support for 266MHz Front Side Bus (FSB) 'C'-type Athlons. Why are we not recommending next-gen AMD or Intel-based systems with DDR/RAMBUS memory? Because currently, the speed benefits are tiny compared with the extra cost. We like the Abit motherboard for its ATA-100 support (faster hard drive performance) and over-clocking potential. The chipset also has its own fan.

BEST BUDGET



GIGABYTE GA-7ZM
STREET PRICE £90, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE (01908) 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

This is basically a sawn-off equivalent of our preferred motherboard, utilising the older chipset version (VIA KT133) and in Micro-ATX format – one AGP and three PCI slots. It'll take both Athlon and Duron Socket A processors of varying speeds, so has upgrade potential. I've used GB motherboards for years and found them the best of the cheaper brands.

PROCESSOR

BEST BUY



AMD 1.2GHZ ATHLON
STREET PRICE £250
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE (01276) 803100 **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

AMD has achieved the unthinkable, toppling Intel from both the performance and price-performance perches simultaneously. We really can't find any reason for gamers to embrace Intel unless they're upgrading into an existing motherboard, in which case you'll have no choice. The 1.2GHz Athlon is a screamer, and surprisingly cheap at around £250. In the bad old days, Intel's top processors set you back more than £500. How competition has changed things! As Athlons over 1GHz are available only in Socket A configuration, make sure you've got the right motherboard. You'll also need to fit a hefty fan.

BEST BUDGET



AMD 800MHZ DURON
STREET PRICE £75, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE (01276) 803100
WEBSITE www.amd.com

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This reduces overall performance somewhat, but still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it the processor of choice for gamers.

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY



IBM DESKSTAR 75GXP 30Mb
STREET PRICE £120, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER IBM
TELEPHONE (0800) 169 1458 **WEBSITE** www.storage.ibm.com

I find it hard to believe that you can buy a 30Gb ATA-100 hard drive for less than £120 – particularly one as excellent as IBM's Deskstar 75GXP. Mine sits in the heart of a hard disk recording system for music, which needs fantastic performance and unquestionable reliability, both of which it delivers. It has a rotational speed of 7,200 RPM (faster than some but slower than others – a good compromise between price and performance) and an average seek time less than 8.5ms. If 30Gb ain't big enough for you, the range extends to a whopping 75Gb, though you'll need around £310 to buy such a beast.

BEST BUDGET



SEAGATE U SERIES 5 20Gb
STREET PRICE £80, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE (01628) 890366 **WEBSITE** www.seagate.com

It's tough these days finding a drive that doesn't offer an ATA-100 interface – in fact, all the decent ATA-66 drives cost more than their ATA-100 equivalents! Seagate's fabulous ATA-100 U Series 5 drives redefine budget performance, featuring 5,400 RPM platters with a sub-9ms seek time. The 20Gb drive is a good compromise between price and capacity.

MONITOR

BEST BUY



IYAMA VISION MASTER PRO 510 22in
STREET PRICE £720
MANUFACTURER Iiyama
TELEPHONE (01438) 745482 **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

I've been a devotee of Iiyama products for years – both my monitors at home are Iiyamas, both are comparatively old yet as good as new. The Vision Master Pro 510 has a stunning 22in screen (albeit with only around 20in of it visible). The tube is a Mitsubishi Diamondtron NF (Natural Flat), arguably the best-performing flat-screen CRT for the money currently available. Of all the large-screen monitors we've come across recently, it's the best all-rounder, with a tight focus right to the screen corners and fabulous colour purity. It also features Iiyama's own Anti-Glare coating, and a maximum resolution of 2,048x1,536.

BEST BUDGET

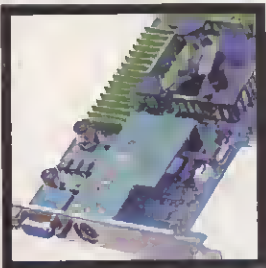


NEC MULTISYNC FE950 19in
STREET PRICE £350
MANUFACTURER NEC
TELEPHONE (020) 8993 8111
WEBSITE www.nec.co.uk

There's never been a better time to upgrade to a 19in monitor – not only have prices dropped dramatically, but there's also some great products at relatively modest prices. The FE950 features a superb Mitsubishi Diamondtron NF tube, will run at 1280x1024 at the magical 85Hz refresh rate, and is just stunning value at less than £350.

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUY



ELSA GLADIAC 920
STREET PRICE £405, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Elsa
TELEPHONE (0800) 056 3445 **WEBSITE** www.elsa.de/international/uk/index.htm

We recently saw this on demo at the Eiffel Tower and all we can say is, welcome to the new king of the 3D castle, NVIDIA's GeForce3 chipset, formerly codenamed NV20. It's the first card to support the sexier features of DirectX 8.0 – hardly surprising since NVIDIA has been intimately involved with the specification of Microsoft's 3D API for a while now. Elsa's Gladiac features an S-Video socket for output to TV – a hell of a lot more useful than you'd think – and comes with a lull, specially enhanced version of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*. Check out the video card round-up on page 108 for the full skinny.

BEST BUDGET



VIOELOGIC VIVIO! 32Mb
STREET PRICE £100, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE (01923) 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

The new drivers have now been released for this card and about time, too. Despite the wait, we like Vivio! – its super-smart technology should ensure that as games become more complex, it copes rather better than cards currently pitched at the same low-end market. In fact, turn to our comparative review on page 108 right now...

SOUND CARD

BEST BUY



VIOELOGIC SONICFURY
STREET PRICE £60-75, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE (01923) 277488 **WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

VideoLogic's SonicFury was the first sound card to utilise the super-efficient Crystal CS4630 chipset, and is still the best value for money. What's so special about it? The chipset, known as SoundFusion, is a multi-purpose Digital Signal Processor (DSP) that can be reprogrammed in software depending on the function it's being used to accelerate. As a result, it can give hardware support for up to 96 streams of DirectSound 3D audio, more than enough for today's crop of games. If you hunt around, you can also find an OEM version of the card on sale with no software bundle – a bargain at under £60.

BEST BUDGET



SOUNDBLASTER PCI512
STREET PRICE £45, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE (01189) 344322 **WEBSITE** www.soundblaster.com

As Creative's SoundBlaster Live! reaches the end of its shelf-life, the company has released a cut-down version featuring the same chipset – the SoundBlaster PCI512. Providing all the bells and whistles required by gamers, this cheaper card represents superb value for money while still supporting DirectSound 3D acceleration and Environmental Audio (EAX).

HEADPHONES

BEST BUY



SENNHEISER HD 200 MASTER
STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
TELEPHONE (01494) 551 551 **WEBSITE** www.sennheiser.co.uk

This German audio company has been around for more than 50 years, founded by the suitably Teutonic sounding Dr Fritz Sennheiser. The HD200s are actually targeted at DJs, and for good reason. They're very, very loud. They're very, very strong. They have a closed back design, meaning you can hear nearby rocket jumpers comfortably while her indoors has *Eastenders* turned up high enough so she can hear it from the kitchen. And, crucially for extended gaming sessions, they're comfortable and light – weighing around 140g. A great pair of cans at a top price.

BEST BUDGET

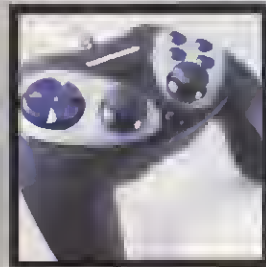


MICROSOFT GAMEVOICE USB
STREET PRICE £49.99, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100 **WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

So how can a set of budget headphones cost more than our current best buy? It's simple really – the GameVoice enables you to talk to your mates over the Internet as you ply them with rockets or sharp objects from an AK-47. It works very well, and as they double as a more-than-decent set of headphones, they're a bit of a bargain.

GAMEPAD

BEST BUY



THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM DUAL-POWER GAMEPAD
STREET PRICE £26
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600 **WEBSITE** www.thrustmaster.co.uk

We may not be that fond of Thrustmaster's joysticks, but this force feedback joystick and its non-force feedback cousin, the Firestorm Dual Analogue, are superbly designed. The Firestorm Dual Power sports no fewer than 13 control buttons, not to mention the twin analogue directional hats. As a result, it's one of the most versatile controllers on the market, equally at home with arcade-style games that need digital pads or tight sims requiring more progressive analogue control. Also included is Thrustmapper software that allows you to customise its behaviour in any game. Delicious, especially at this price.

BEST BUDGET

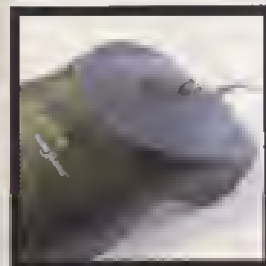


MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER PLUG 'N' PLAY GAMEPAD
STREET PRICE £12
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

Four buttons, two triggers, directional pad, USB. Dead simple, dead effective and really rather cheap. The Plug 'n' Play Gamepad is the new basic controller from the Seattle Sidewinders and comes in funky transparent plastic, in contrast to the gloomy black pads of yesteryear.

MOUSE

BEST BUY



RAZER BOOMSLANG 2000
STREET PRICE £70, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Labtec
TELEPHONE (01256) 386000 **WEBSITE** www.razerzone.com, www.labtec.com

These fabulous über-mice have been the instrument of death for the *Quake* elite for a couple of years now. During this time, the only way you could get your hands on one was to import it from America and pay a premium, as you couldn't actually buy them in this country. But now all this has changed, thanks to Labtec picking up the hardware. OK, so it is rather expensive and it also takes quite a bit of getting used to, but if you're looking for a real lift to your gaming, then the Razer Boomslang 2000 is the only way to go.

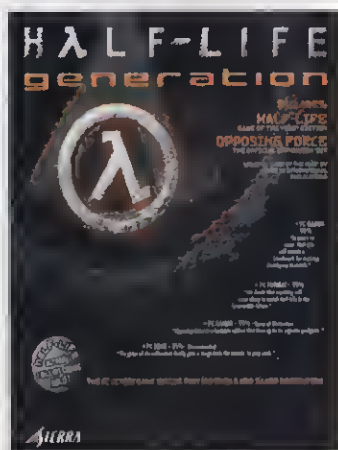
BEST BUDGET



MICROSOFT USB INTELLIMOUSE
STREET PRICE £15, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/mouse/intellimouse.htm

The basic USB IntelliMouse is one of the finest control devices ever produced – accurate, comfortable to use and, above all, cheap. In fact, all the fancy mice Microsoft has produced since then are deeply inferior for gaming in our opinion, mainly due to shape and button positioning.

2 FOR £40*



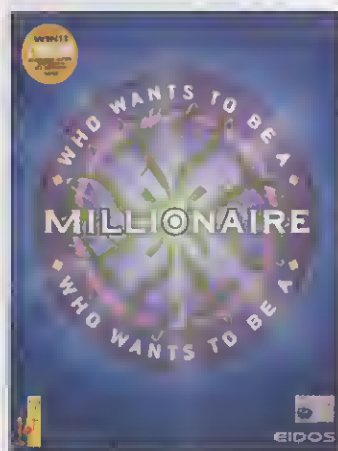
HALF LIFE GENERATIDNS



THEME PARK INC



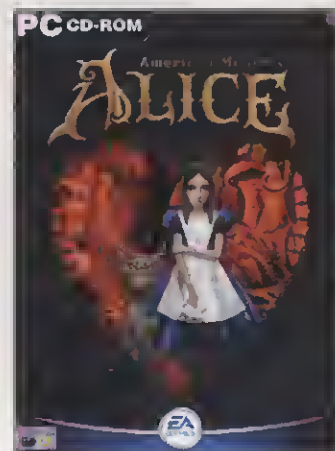
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER
2000/2001



WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE



SUDDEN STRIKE



ALICE

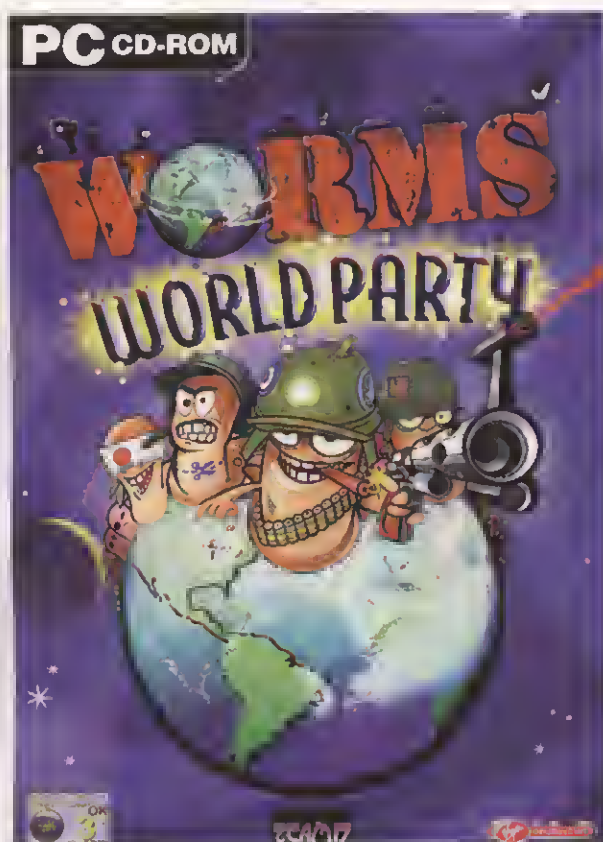
WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

*Stickered product only, while stocks last, prices may vary in Republic of Ireland.

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WIGGLE IT!



WORMS WORLD PARTY

Buy Worms World Party and get
Pro Pinball Fantastic Journey free*



WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON!

Virgin

megastores

LONGER LIFE GAMING

PROLONGING THE FUN Martin Korda



There's nothing worse than getting bored of your favourite game. Once you've played all the campaigns and mastered all

the difficulty levels, there's really very little else left for you to do. Which is hopefully where Extended Play (page 142) comes in.

Because we used to ship with only one CD, we were always pretty constrained by space. However, now that we're giving you two disks instead of one, we've decided to double the amount of space dedicated to new levels, maps, missions and mods.

This month, there's ten new *Counter-Strike* maps and a whole host of *Unreal Tournament* levels to help spice up your frag life. If you're not that way inclined though, we're also breathing new life into *PGA Championship Golf 2000*, with a great collection of new courses. Next month we'll be bringing you a load of *Shogun* maps and *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* parks to try out, so make sure you don't miss them. Some of you have sent us some of your own design efforts, so you never know, you might find your creations on next month's CD.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

118 CHEAT MASTER

Every cheater's best friend, Keith Pullin, does his best to help you get ahead.

119 DEAR KEITH

Uncle Keith comes to the rescue with the answers to all your gaming gripes.

120 DEAR WANDY

Need to find a solution to a niggling technical pain? Our resident techie Wandy is here to help.

122 WATCHDOG

Have you got a problem with a company? Then allow the consumers' champion Adam Phillips to find out some answers...

124 SITES FOR SORE EYES

Why waste your time trawling through pages and pages of useless stuff on the Internet, when you can just let us find the good stuff for you?

YOUR HOSTS



Adam Phillips



Keith Pullin



Phil Wand

CHEAT MASTER

Get stuck into this month's generous offering of game-busting cheats and tips

CHEATING GIT Keith Pullin

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/Cheat Master, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with Dear Keith or Cheat Master in the subject line.

elderrune	Regeneration
moonshadow	Phase cloak
munificentfrenzy	Weapons locker created
fistsoflegend	Fists of legend mode
killmequick	Ultra mode
carousel	Slow motion
thedayismine	Developer mode

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

As promised last month, we bring you more codes for the utterly fantastic *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*. By the way, when you enter the code correctly the screen shakes. Hope you enjoy...

- To set stats to level 5, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press up, c, v, up, down.
- To set stats to level 6, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press down, c, v, up, down.
- To set stats to level 7, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press left, c, v, up, down.
- To set stats to level 8, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press right, c, v, up, down.
- To set stats to level 9, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press b, c, v, up, down.
- To set stats to level 10, pause the

game, hold Numpad 7 and press space, v, b, c, v, up, down.

- For extra points, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press c, b, right, c, b, right, c, b, right.
- For more cash, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press space, down, left, right, down, left, right.
- For a special meter that's constantly at maximum, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press space, v, b, b, up, left, v, and c.
- For low gravity, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press space, c, left, up, down, up, c, v.
- For seriously weird gravity, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press left, up, left, up, down, up, c, v, left, up, left, up, down, up, c, v.
- To fly, go to the main menu, press up, up, up, space, c, up, up, up, up, spacebar, c, up, up, up, up. Now press the following keys to fly:

Space	Float up
V	Fly forward
Numpad 7	Turn left
Numpad 9	Turn right

STAR TREK: STARFLEET COMMAND 2

Interplay
• To adjust the game settings, use Microsoft Excel to open the file 'namedir\assets\spec\shiplist.txt'. Edit the settings to whatever you like (don't worry - it makes perfect sense when you see it on screen) and save the file.

• You can also try this cool edit for ultra-high starting prestige. Simply open up the file called



That's the wrong way round you fool.

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So, you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheatmaster, do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it by entering our Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most ridiculous and pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the PC ZONE prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address,

to letters@pczone.co.uk. Make sure to include all your correct details, so it you do win, we know where to send your special prize (see left). Well done to this month's winner, Richard Hallsworth from Berkshire, whose crap cheat allows you to control the in-game wildlife in *Age Of Empires*. To achieve this, all you have to do is bring up the chat box and type 'Gaia'. And here's your prize Richard, an inflatable morning star, which you can piss all your friends off with by pummeling them over the head for no apparent reason. Enjoy.

'metaassets\serverprofiles\singleplayer\character' with a text editor and look for the line: 'StartingPrestige=50'. Change this value to anything you want up to 5,000,000 for some much-needed help to buy ships and supplies.

SUDDEN STRIKE CDV

During the game, suddenly press 'Enter' and type in any of these codes for some Red Cross help...

****superman** Invincibility
****staticfog** Fog on
****nofog** Fog off
****starcraft** Spaceships instead of bombers

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2 Codemasters

Make a new driver with any tag. Then to unlock these cheats, type one of the following as your name.

letnewin Unlock every option

turnontheice Turn on music
eatthis Handbrake fires flaming ball
allthebuttons Gives you all the cars
gofasterstripes Speeds up cars
Jimmyscar Gives you the Sierra Cosworth
greatnews Unlocks all the tracks
jobinitaly Gives you the Mini Cooper
bouncybouncybouncy Low gravity
curryforme Speed up

nuttynets Makes cars more violent
coolestcar Gives you the Ford Puma
offroad Gives you the Lancer Road car
morrismode Gives you the Escort MK1 car

CHICKEN RUN Eidos Interactive

To skip to the next level, type 'worruly' during the game.

GUNLOK Virgin Interactive

Open the console by pressing '~' and then type these codes:

Reb god God mode
Reb infinite ammo Unlimited ammo
Next level Skip to next level
Give [character name] [item name] Give item

Item list

Laser Binary_Laser
Maxim_Laser Plasma_Pistol
Plasmatrix Nanofrag
Plasmagnum Flamethrower
Epulsar Key
Keyb Shield_Pickup
Armour_Pickup Lock_Decoder
Beacon_Tracker Terrain_Scanner
Omni_Scanner Hologram_Generator
Audio_Cloak Sight_Pickup
Autolock_Bolts (Ammo)
Grenade_Launcher
Grenade_Plus (Ammo)

PHONE FOR HELP

Having trouble with a game and can't wait to see a reply in these pages? Then you need to check out...

THE PC ZONE TIPS HELPLINE ON

0906 466 4475

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On the rare occasion that they can't help, your query will be passed on to a support team who guarantee to find you an answer within 24 hours.

• Calls cost £1.50 per minute at all times. Charges will appear on your standard telephone bill. If you do not pay the bill yourself, seek permission from whoever does pay it before calling. If you have any problems, please call customer services on 0870 800 6155

Grenade_Emp (Ammo)

Missile Launcher

Missile_Plus (Ammo)

Missile_Emp (Ammo)

Battery_Plus (Ammo)

Napalm (Ammo)

Aim_Accuracy_Pickup

Terrain_Scanner_With_Radar [x]

DEAR KEITH

Once again, Keith Pullin assists the wounded warriors of digital wonderland

GIANT SNIPER

Q I've just bought *Giants: Citizen Kabuto* and I'm stuck on a level quite near the start. I'm trying to take Timmy back to his father, but I keep getting taken out by snipers in the tower. What really annoys me is the way that I cannot seem to hide from them no matter where I stand. The other Mecc who is with me is completely useless and couldn't hit a house from two feet away. I simply cannot see a way through. Please help me out.

Adam Hilltree, Carlisle

A Well, Adam, I think you've taken the hard way through this sniper zone. When you first enter the walled area there is an archway hidden away over to the left - if you go in this direction there are fewer snipers, making your journey much easier. That's the way I did it anyway. Can't offer any more than that I'm afraid.

LEG WORK

Q I have completed *Diablo II* and have started the Nightmare difficulty setting. One thing that bothered me the first time was the Wirt's Leg thing.

I read somewhere that it allows you into a secret level. Can you explain this further at all?

Stu Bainbridge, Lissiemouth

A Yes, I can. Once you have Wirt's Leg (by killing Griswald in act 1, quest 3), go to the Rogue Encampment and put Wirt's Leg and a Tome of Town Portal into The Horadric Cube and press transmute. When you close the inventory you should see a red portal. Go through this and it will lead you to that elusive secret level.

POWER PROBLEMS

Q Please help - I've just about lost my rag with *Tomb Raider: Chronicles*. I've reached the part where you're on the submarine and I've got the battery (negative part) and the aqualung but have no idea what to do next. I'm stuck. Please help.

Andrew Bradbury, email

A Return to the dining hall and open the closed door. Go through it. Go to the room on the right, kill the guard, climb the box and jump holding the action button. A trapdoor should open

above you. Go through and open the trapdoor at the other end. Climb down, kill the soldier, get the battery (positive part) from the drawer and combine the two battery parts into suit battery. All you need to do now is head towards the torpedo room where you can find a suit console to use on your aqualung. Hope this helps, Andy.

FOOTY FEVER

Q I'm playing *FIFA 2001* and find it impossible to score directly from free kicks. I always hit the wall, blast it over or whack it straight at the goalkeeper. Taking corners is also a nightmare. Any tips?

Raymond Monaghan, email

A To score from free kicks you have to get the ball up and over the wall. The way to do this is to kick the ball higher but with not so much power - complement this with some aftertouch and you should be on target. Use a similar technique with corners to cause mayhem in the box.



GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

Q After discovering that *Black & White* has been delayed yet again, I decided to buy the next best thing and so launched myself into *Populous: The Beginning*. But, yes, you've guessed it - I'm stuck. Basically, I haven't got a clue how to stop those damn balloons on level 13. What's the strategy?

Paul Bakhouse, Wallington

A Simple. Place fire warriors in guard towers and then use the Shaman to zap the balloon occupants with lightning. When they are empty, steal them and attack the other tribes.

DEAR WANDY

It's another bulging sack of computer wretchedness. Can Wandy wave his magic rod and make everyone happy before bedtime?

★ SORCERER Phil Wand

GOT A QUERY, DEARY?

Send us a query or a top tip and you could pocket £50.

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type-thing. And as an extra incentive, we're offering a cool £50 to the reader who sends in the most interesting query or toppest tip every single month. No, really. Send as much relevant information as you can.

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EMAIL Address your letters to us at
letters.pczon@dennis.co.uk with
the subject heading 'Dear Wazza'.

Please note: while we can assure you that we read every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone. Thanks.

"I've just bought Deus Ex, but it plays very slowly. Is this because I only have an Intel graphics driver, not a 3D card?"

STEVE DIAS

WINDOW WHAT?

Q I'm very confused. After reading numerous articles and comments, I am still none the wiser, so here's my simple question: what's the deal with Windows 98, Windows 2000, Windows ME and games? Can Windows 98 games be played on Windows 2000 and ME, and vice versa? More importantly for me, can Windows 95 games be played on any other Windows systems?

I'm asking this as I'm considering buying a new PC but am unsure where I stand with these things. I do enjoy my classic 95 games, but I also want to enjoy the new ones, and am getting ted up with playing *Team Fortress Classic* on a P166 with 32Mb and no 3D card.

You've probably heard this question thousands of times, and repeat the answer in your sleep, but how about telling it again for the sake of old times?

Martin Whatley

A Microsoft operating systems can be separated into two distinct groups, distinct by code, not by appearance. In the home user corner you have Windows 95, which was followed by 98 and now ME. For the business market, you have NT and Windows 2000.

Here's the fun part. NT users are somewhat limited in their choice of entertainment, as their system is not compatible with all versions of DirectX. Windows 2000, on the other hand, fully supports the latest releases of DirectX. Combine

this with USB support and a good set of drivers for modern sound and video cards, and suddenly the office operating system can throw off its pin-striped suit and run around with a rocket launcher.

I have two Windows 2000 PCs at home, and regularly play games on them (*Team Fortress Classic*, *MechWarrior*, *Unreal Tournament*, and so on). Expect to see more and more games running on the platform in the future, although few home users will require its added security and stability, and nor will they be able to afford it.

If you are buying a new system, it's probably going to be bundled with ME, which is essentially the latest addition to a long line of Windows 95 operating systems. As such, it will run any well-written program designed for either 95 or 98, and indeed any game you care to throw at it.

FILL MY SLOT

Q My Pentium II 450 has been getting a little inadequate of late, and I want to upgrade. I know about the different processor speeds out there, but know very little about the motherboards they are mounted on.

I currently have my PII on an Intel 440BX. I want to go into the budget range, because of the cost of motherboards, so I bought an AMD Duron, which motherboard would I need to buy, and for how much? Or can I buy a Pentium III (or any other processor for that matter) and run it on the same motherboard?

Dylan Behagg

A Your current CPU is slot-based (ie it looks like a Nintendo cartridge), and the current P3 is socket based. That said, the original P3s were slot-based, and so if you can find one, and your BIOS will support it, you should be OK.

Unfortunately, you don't say who your motherboard manufacturer is, and since many manufacturers used the 440BX chipset, you'll have to

check their website for BIOS updates and information relating to support for the latest chips. After all that, it might actually be cheaper to buy a new motherboard and a Duron or Thunderbird.

Probably the most respected boards for AMO chips are the Abit KT-7a and Asus KT7, based on the Via KT133 family chipset. They support the Duron and Thunderbird, so you have an easy upgrade path should you crave more power in a few months.

IS MY GRAPHICS CARD CRAP?

Q I've just bought *Deus Ex*, but when I go to play it, it's very slow – when I turn in the game, it has to load up for a couple seconds and this happens constantly.

Is it because I only have an Intel 810 Chipset Graphics Driver and not a 3D card? If so, which cheap graphics card would you recommend (I have less than £80 to spend), and what spec would I need for playing games like *Deus Ex*, *Escape From Monkey Island* and so on?

Steve Dias

A You don't say how much memory you have, or how fast your machine is, but I would recommend a minimum of 64Mb RAM and 400MHz for modern games. The 810 chipset graphics are a big no-no.

Budget recommendations would have to include the ageing but capable 3dfx Voodoo3 3000 for around £60. But perhaps a better choice would be the budget entry from VideoLogic, the Vivid, at around the £100 mark. Good value if you can find the extra cash.

ATHLON OR PENTIUM?

Q I'm thinking of buying a new PC, primarily to run games, but I'm not sure whether it's best to go for a 1.3GHz Pentium 4, or a 1.2GHz Athlon (they both have the

Don't listen to your mates – AMD chips are not "incompatible".

same specification, but the Athlon is around £200 cheaper).

How much difference is there in real-world speed between the two? I understand that the Pentium 4 has RDRAM compared with the Athlon's SDRAM – will this have a significant effect on the speed? I would also like to know how much faster a graphics card with DDR memory is compared to a card of the same chipset with SDR memory.

Ashley Hobbs

A I personally would go for the AMO Athlon. The current AMO Thunderbird really is a screamer, and is right up there with the new Pentium 4 in terms of thrust. Given the £200 price difference, it should be an easy decision for you.

RDRAM is indeed faster than standard SDRAM, and is one of the routes Intel has had to resort to in order to catch up with AMO in the performance stakes. Unfortunately, it's also a lot more expensive, so you'll have to consider what you're going to do if and when you want to add more memory.

BIG PATCHES

Q I'm worried. I've recently bought a new PC and, even more recently, *Half-Life Generations*. I've completed *Opposing Force* and the original *Half-Life* Game of the Year edition. Now I have the online idea firmly stuck in my head.

My PC has a 56K modem, and I have a new multiplayer character and logo set up. But the only thing missing is the Internet – I haven't sorted out a dial-up. My worry is that when my friend, who bought the game at the same time as me, clicked the Quickstart entry in the main menu, a message



TFC should run just fine with Windows 2000.

came up saying he needed to "update *Half-Life*". Everyone says that you have to update *Half-Life* to be able to play *Counter-Strike* and *Team Fortress* online, and it takes about four hours for each version. Is this true?

Skalien

A Playing any FPS game on the Internet really does extend its life – there is something perversely pleasurable about knowing there's a real person controlling that soldier you just stabbed in the back.

Unfortunately, no sooner does an online game come out, than someone finds a way to exploit a loophole and cheating becomes rife. This would ruin the game for everyone, so the authors issue regular updates to fix problems, and usually throw in a few more levels just for good measure.

Even more unfortunate is the fact that *Half-life*-based games seem to have had a very bad run of patches that introduce even more loopholes – prompting the developers to release yet more files to fix problems they introduced last time around.

Luckily, you can usually find a patch which gets you pretty close to, if not actually up to, the current version from magazine cover disks. It's about 52Mb, which would take somewhere between three and four hours to download. Once you have this, you can download a much smaller update patch from places such as www.planethalflife.com

It either you or your friend has a CD writer, copy the files onto a blank CD to save you both having to download the same files.

0800 WAIT

Q Having read pages and pages about it in *ZONE*, I decided to try Internet gaming. I needed to get a cheaper, preferably free ISP, as my mum would go ballistic if I were to do this on my existing one. Then I saw X-Stream advertised: free 0800 connection with the minor

inconvenience of advertising banners. So I signed up and tried to log on... it was engaged. That was a year ago now, and I still haven't managed to get through.

Could you recommend a free or monthly charged ISP, preferably one I can get through to at least once a week?

Tom Pickering

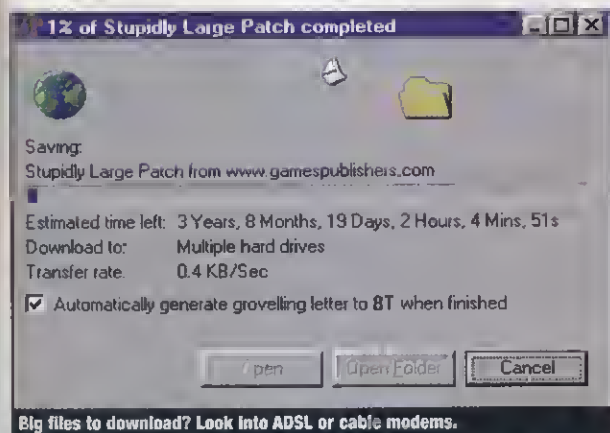
A Free ISPs are nearly always oversubscribed, and are always popular with people who want to download and download and download... and nobody else gets a look in.

X-Stream has just relaunched its 0800 off-peak service, but we'd suggest if you've had bad experiences with them that you give them a miss. And anyway, with advertising banners, it's not really suited to gaming, as every minute you'll find yourself lagging as the service gobbles bandwidth to pop open another ad on your desktop that you can't even see from within a game.

My advice would be to look for an ISP that charges a regular monthly subscription but allows you unmetered access – that is, no call charges – to the Internet. Check www.nel4nowt.co.uk for details of every provider running such a scheme.

As for the graphics card, the first 'D' in DDR stands for Double, which means it's theoretically capable of twice the speed of normal SDR memory. Whether the rest of the card actually makes full use of this extra data bandwidth is down to chip design, but it's a pretty safe bet that a DDR card will be a good bit faster than the same card with SDR.

If you want to compare cards with different processors, check the texels per second measurements. For example, the old GeForce256 DDR (the fast memory) rates 480m a second, yet the newer GeForce2 MX SDR (the slower memory) pumps out 700m. **[X]**



PCZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE

EXCLUSIVE
REVIEWS

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

As you read this Westwood will have finished its latest real-time strategy, a game that sees Westwood finally embrace 3D graphics as it revisits Frank Herbert's *Dune* universe in the sequel to the game that shaped the real-time strategy genre. Plus, in what's shaping up to be one of the most exciting releases of the year, Codemasters is set to unleash *Operation Flashpoint* on an unsuspecting public. We've followed it from its conception and we have the world exclusive review next issue.

TRIBES 2

We've been playing beta code for months, but now we finally have the finished game. The servers are up and running, thousands are already logging on and hopefully the sequel to one of the most innovative first-person shooters will become as popular here as it is across the Atlantic.

ALSO REVIEWED: *Star Trek: Away Team*, *Fallout Tactics*, *Tropico*, *Star Wars: Battle For Naboo*, *Desperados*, *F1 World Grand Prix*, *Summoner*, *Drigmal War*, and a Sneak 'Em Up Supertest

ALONE IN THE DARK IV: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

As we gear up for our exclusive review of *Alone In The Dark IV*, we'll take a look at how the game is shaping up as we play through the latest code and bring you a full report.

I-WAR 2 VS BATTLECRUISER MILLENNIUM

Two of the biggest space sim sequels square up – we test both and talk to the developers

EXCLUSIVE DEMOS

Z: *Steel Soldiers*, *eRacer*, *Battlecruiser Millennium* – new exclusive mission, *Magic & Mayhem: The Art Of War*, plus many more...

PCZONE
READER AWARDS
2000
The winners and losers,
voted by you

ON SALE THURSDAY MAY 3

WATCHDOG

The software industry can be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. So let **PC ZONE** ramraid their premises and snatch some answers...

★ WRITER Adam Philips



LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

"That's the last straw!" If this is what you find yourself saying, never fear, we're here to help. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing, drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF.

EMAIL Email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading "Watchdog".

TIME'S UP

Q I agreed to purchase a Time 800-7 computer on November 18 last year. It arrived on the 29th and, to my surprise, it was a higher spec than advertised. However, on setting it up and trying to play some games, the limitations of the TNT2 graphics became apparent.

I rang the helpline, which the salesman had told me would only cost local call rates for the first 30 days after purchase, only to find a message telling me that this was now a premium line at 50p per minute and would I like to be transferred? I very reluctantly said yes, only to be put into a queue where I waited

for five minutes before hanging up in disgust.

There was a note in the delivery box of the computer proudly telling me that support can be provided free of charge through the knowledge base on its website (www.timesupport.com). However, the support pages are rubbish and most of them point to sending an e-mail to the customer care centre. I have done this on numerous occasions, but have received no response whatsoever.

There is also a further section on the website that requires you to enter the warranty number. But on my invoice, there is no warranty number, despite the fact

that it is under a 12-month warranty due to the Sale of Goods Act. I have faxed the customer service centre and tried ringing – congrats to those of you who managed to get through.

Finally, I wrote to the managing director and he hasn't had the courtesy to reply to me personally. I did receive a

letter that answered none of my queries and just reiterated the support line numbers – now costing £1 per minute.

So how did I cure the graphics card problem? I took a chance and purchased a Voodoo3-3000 PCI card, stuck it in a slot and it worked – once I changed the BIOS settings to PCI rather than AGP. Beware folks, most Time Computers don't come with an AGP slot. Anyone with little or no knowledge of PCs should stay well away from this company.

David Jarvis

A As usual, Time's answer was brief and to the point: "Customer services has contacted David Jarvis and apologised for his situation," it says. "We have found no outstanding technical issues but have offered three complimentary software titles as a gesture of goodwill, which the customer has accepted and is happy with."

Jolly good but no explanation for us, the humble buying public, as to why David could never seemingly get through to the company. Or

why Time charges £1 per minute for its helpdesk...

DRIVE YOU OUT OF YOUR TINY MIND

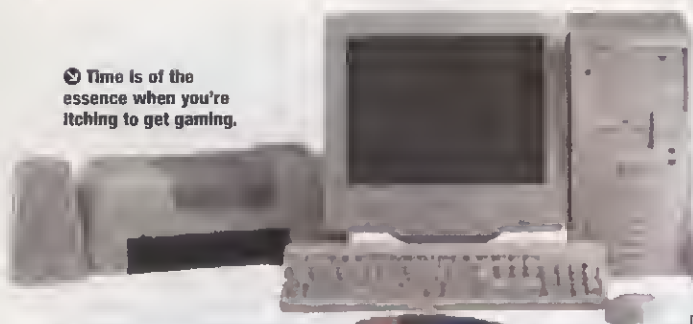
Q Last year, I purchased a PC from Tiny. In mid-December the hard drive went belly-up on me so I called Tiny's warranty people, who "promise" to deal with all problems within 16 hours. Well, some eight weeks later and here I am still sat with an expensive machine that can display little more than the words: "Abort, Retry or Fail?"

I have had two visits from engineers – one neglected to bring the parts with him, while the other "fixed" it, only for it to go wrong again almost immediately. For the rest of the time, Tiny's phone-answering robots have been giving me the runaround by booking phantom appointments that engineers never keep.

Avoid Tiny like the plague! Its products are a pile of junk and its after-sales care is a joke. Oh, its salesmen are friendly and helpful, but once Tiny has your money, it ceases to give a damn.

J Worthing

Time is of the essence when you're itching to get gaming.



TIME AFTER TIME AFTER TIME...

Another month, yet another complaint about Time's computers and so-called customer service

Q I bought a Time computer before Christmas. I set it up and was happy with it until three weeks later when I started having problems. I couldn't shutdown the computer properly because when I tried, the dreaded blue screen appeared saying: "Internal Error, restart your computer." So I have to turn the power off via the switch.

I also had problems with the sound from the start, with games such as *Deus Ex* and *System Shock 2*. The sound was distorted, scratchy and fuzzy. I re-installed Direct X, but the problem remained. So I installed the latest drivers, but to no avail.

Then the next day, there was no sound at all. So I installed the old drivers for my sound card, but still no sound. I also discovered that my sound card wasn't what I had been told it was – I ordered a 12B PCI SoundBlaster card, but it isn't PCI

and I don't think it's 128. It's actually a built-in sound card attached to the motherboard. I was told it would be a slotted PCI sound card when I ordered it.

Also, on opening the CPU case, I discovered I had three PCI slots and one ISA slot. But when I ordered it, I was told: "It has four PCI slots and two ISA slots." Another thing I discovered was that the SDRAM was 100MHz, when I was told it would be 133MHz. I decided to see what Time had to say.

I phoned the store, told them the situation, and was told to phone a £1-a-minute helpline and to ask them to sort it out. I replied: "I've just paid £1,500 for one of

your computers and I didn't even get what I ordered. On top of the fact that it's faulty."

Eventually, she put me on to the store manager who said: "You'll have to buy the back-up discs for £50." I replied: "I'm not paying for that!" He said: "Well, you refused the back-up discs." I replied: "Yes, I did, believing it was the system and drivers CD."

But I hadn't been told I was refusing the Windows CD – I was told I was refusing the drivers CD. But I still received the system and drivers CD with my computer, but no Windows ME CD. He said: "You'll have to purchase the CD," and that there was nothing he could do.

Whoops apocalypse, looks like Time has messed it up again.

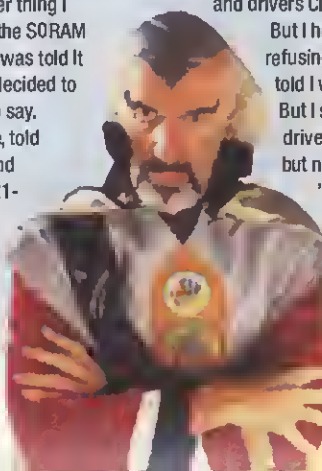
So I phoned up the £1-a-minute line. I ended up being referred to six different departments and in the end was told: "There's nothing we can do." I am extremely angry.

Mrs CA Fraser

A Ahh, yet another complaint about Time. Well, we shot off your complaint to them to see if we would have more luck than you.

Eventually, Time sent us the following reply: "Time customer services contacted Mrs Fraser and advised her that a full refund has been authorised. We have arranged for her goods to be picked up within the next few working days. The customer is happy with this arrangement."

We're sure she is. But if it's a shame we had to step in on her behalf to get a reasonable response from Time.



A We contacted Tiny about your not-so-tiny problems. It quickly cranked out the following response to us: "A customer services manager has been in touch with Mr Worthing to resolve his issues. We have apologised for any inconvenience he has experienced and an engineer will be visiting Mr Worthing at his convenience."

Great. Let's hope the engineer has the right equipment this time. Let us know, Mr Worthing.

BUGGED BY BUY.COM!

Q I am currently having trouble with Buy.com (www.gb.buy.com). On December 2, I ordered a Creative Labs PC-DVD Encore f2x Infra for £139.78. When it arrived, it did not work with my TV. I contacted Creative Labs for support, and was advised that my DXr3 card was probably faulty and told me to contact my supplier (Buy.com). I organised a replacement on December 7.

The representative at Buy.com said I would get a phone call within 24 hours. This did not happen, so I phoned again and was told "there has been a delay in the returns department" and that I would get a phone call or e-mail the next (working) day.

Monday came and went without, so again I phoned and again they apologised. I was finally e-mailed on the Tuesday and given details of how to arrange collection from a courier.

By this time (December 12), I was not particularly happy. I phoned Buy.com and asked to speak to a supervisor. I asked the supervisor, Debbie, if

there was any way they could get my replacement sent out before Christmas. She said there was not and that the returns process was clearly stated in their Terms & Conditions. However, she did suggest that I could return the faulty one for credit and order a new one.

I did decide to do this but the price had gone up – it was now £145.19 – so Debbie said I could have next-day delivery free of

says Alex Mitchell, Buy.com's customer relations manager.

He says the company has been experiencing delays in its returns department, especially around Christmas, although he adds Buy.com is "working hard to improve the situation. Significant headway has already been made."

As for the confusion over the billing, Alex offers the following explanation: "In the

"Tiny promises to deal with all problems within 16 hours. Eight weeks later..."

J WORTHING DESPAIRS OF TINY'S AFTER-SALES CARE

charge, which I did appreciate.

I was originally only charged for the second order on December 18, but now find that on January 11, after I had returned the first order, I was also charged for that.

I contacted Buy.com on January 18 for an explanation, which they could not supply – they only said they had arranged to credit my account. This proved untrue, as subsequent conversations the following day showed they had only just started the credit process (payment was authorised on January 19) and that it would take three to five working days to reach my account.

I don't mind if there are delays in the process – my complaint is not being informed of them. It is the overall standard of service that keeps customers happy, and I am most definitely not happy with Buy.com.

Sam Coleman

A Buy.com says it aims to provide world-class customer service: "Although in this instance, I agree that we could have done better for Mr Coleman,"

normal run of events, the first order would have been billed automatically as soon as it left the warehouse, and placing a second order rather than waiting for the replacement to be sent would result in being billed for the second order as well. In this instance, the first order was not billed until the January 9 – the system did not pick up that the item had been returned already."

As soon as it was aware of the problem, it applied a credit for the cost of one of the two DVD drives. "Unfortunately, it will always take several working days for a credit to be processed as it has to not only go through our own internal system but also the card issuer's procedures before it shows on the customer's account," offers Alex. "I can confirm, however, that this refund has been processed."

Buy.com agrees that it was not acceptable to promise to call you back and then not do so: "As Mr Coleman rightly points out, the key aspect in this unfortunate episode is communication, and we failed to provide an adequate level on several aspects." [E2]

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, whether it be a ropey piece of software or a shoddy PC, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs especially, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means that we can resolve your problems much more quickly.

A Tiny problem can often turn into a nightmare.

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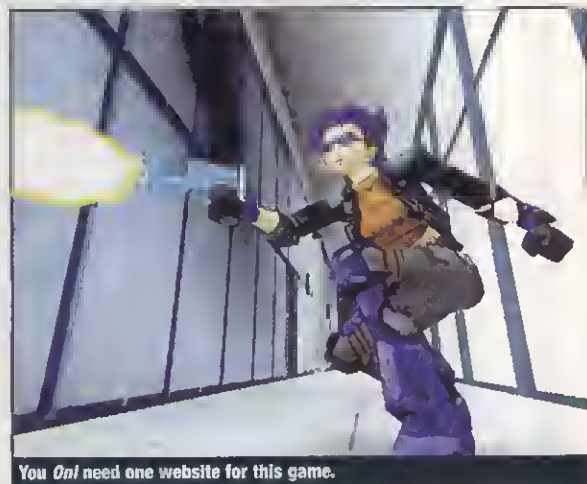
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SITES FOR SORE EYES

We reveal the best strategy guides and walkthroughs on the Net

★ TALENT SCOUT Keith Pullin

There are countless guides on the Net which can reveal all the hints and tips you'll ever need when you're stuck on a game. So here's a rundown of the very best sites for some of your favourite games, both old and new. The answers are out there, you just have to know where to look.



You *Oni* need one website for this game.

ONI

★ www.rbcheats.com/Cheats/pc/o/1051

Information and tips in particular are a bit sparse for Bungie's anime baby, so you're just going to have to make do with this site. Okay, so it's not spectacular by any stretch of the imagination, but it should at least allow you to get a fair distance into the game. Better than a kick in the teeth...

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

★ www.gamersx.com/sshock2/

This startlingly detailed site leaves absolutely nothing to the imagination and is the essential

guide for any struggling psionic hacker. There are maps, walkthroughs, cheats, hacks, in-depth character and class profiles and much, much more. Make sure you have a printer handy – this is the biz.

ALIEN VS PREDATOR

★ www.planetavp.com/

If you're seriously intent on performing an alien autopsy, you should seriously consider spending some time flicking around here. As well as a distinguished array of cheats, hints and walkthroughs, there's the opportunity to get your hands on the latest patches,

skins and other downloads. Updated daily.



Ⓜ Aren't they sweet?

HEAVY METAL FAKK 2

★ cheatplanet.com/pccheats/heavy_metal_fakk_2.htm

This doesn't feature much in the way of a walkthrough, but you'll find plenty of cheats for level skips and stuff. Though hardly stunning, this site should contain everything you need to get through the game.



Ⓜ Perfectly rounded.

MYST MASTERPIECE EDITION

★ www.gameboomers.com/wtcheats/pcMm/myst.html

Once again we find a site that's low on style but high on content. But that doesn't matter – when you're playing an adventure game all you need to know is where to go next, and if you have a gander at what's on offer here, you can't go far wrong.



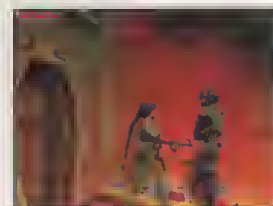
Ⓜ This website shows you the way.

TOMB RAIDER 4: THE LAST REVELATION

★ trinity.westhost.com/tomb/revelation/

Known as the Traveller's Guide, this really is a worthy tome. The lack of visual appeal may

put off some surfers, but there's no denying the superb content. Highlights include a comprehensive list of hidden treasures, enemies of note and a thorough walkthrough. You won't be needing any other sites.



Ⓜ "Go on, I dare you."

PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D

★ www.charm.net/~wizards/computershow/walkthroughs/princeofpersia3dwalk.htm

Why you'd want to play this load of old tosh is anyone's guess. Still, everyone has a gaming preference and if this is yours, this is the site you need to visit. As well as an entire walkthrough, there are many other links to cheats, reviews and a few other interesting goodies.



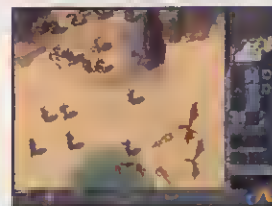
Ⓜ He'll never make it.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

★ www.avault.com/cheats/getcheat.asp?game=takfaq

Adrenaline Vault offers a huge list of guides and cheats, including one of the best strategy guides around for *TA: Kingdoms*, as well as most of the available cheats. Visually this site may not be much of a stunner, but as always it's the content that counts. This comprehensive guide should answer all your questions regarding this ageing RTS favourite.

Ⓜ Alice gets the horn.

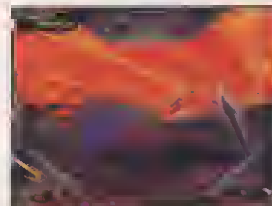


Ⓜ Learn each side's weakness.

KLINGON HONOUR GUARD

★ www.gameszone.co.uk/Pc/klngon.htm

Unfortunately, you're not going to find much in the way of walkthroughs for this one, but you will find all the cheats you need. It's quite an old game, so it's more than possible that any websites which boasted a walkthrough for it have now been consigned to an honourable burial.

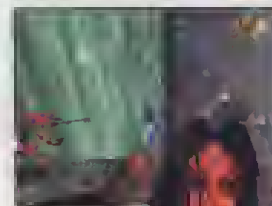


Ⓜ Where is everybody?

AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE

★ www.avault.com/cheats/getcheat.asp?game=mp_alice

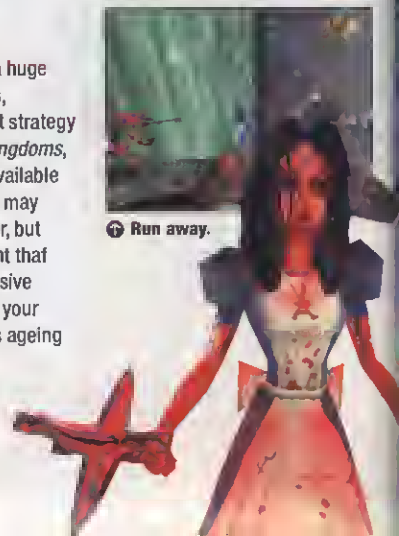
You can virtually guarantee that Avault.com will be the first with most guides and tips, and with *Alice* they do not disappoint. Packed into this site is a full list of all the cheats, a complete walkthrough and a save game file for the last level. It may not be spectacular, but it covers all bases.



Ⓜ Run away.

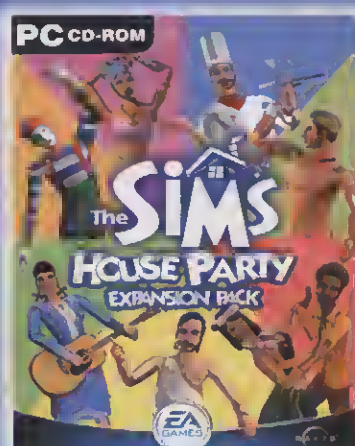


"Go on, give us a hug."



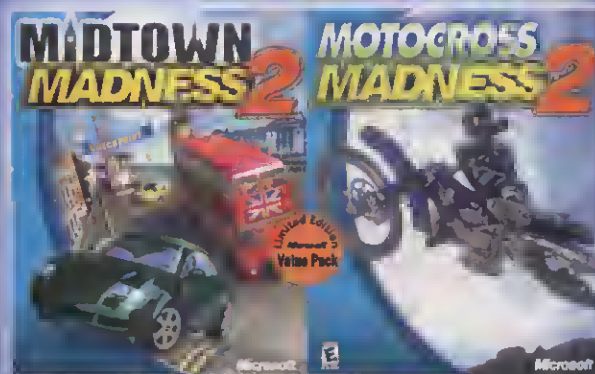
HMV

seriously addictive...



THE SIMS HOUSE PARTY EXPANSION PACK

Everything you need to create the perfect party atmosphere for your Sims. Over 100 new objects plus new decor sets and costumes. Enjoy new group activities such as marshmallow roasting or a game of charades. Hire caterers and dancers or build a dance floor with a DJ booth and watch your Sims take to the floor with new dance moves based on five music styles. Requires the original *The Sims* to play.



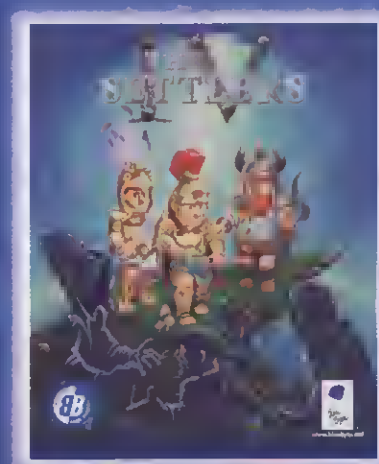
MIDTOWN MADNESS 2 & MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2 DOUBLE PACK

A great value double pack offering the most fun you'll ever have on two and four wheels. *Midtown Madness 2* delivers even more madcap racing excitement with all the wild and hair-raising racing challenges you've come to expect. *Motocross Madness 2* features all of the killer dirtbike action of the original along with entirely new gameplay depth, graphics realism, accessibility and multiplayer features.



COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 1 & 2 DOUBLE PACK

Combining all the realism of *Microsoft Flight Simulator* with the air combat excitement of WWII. Fly beautifully modeled aircraft each with its own realistic flight models and accurately detailed cockpits. Campaign over the war-torn landscapes of Berlin, Paris and London. You can even use the powerful graphical Mission Builder to re-create famous conflicts.



THE SETTLERS IV

Build up a colony with a thriving construction and mining industry. Choose to lead one of three different races each with its own unique characters, buildings and mission objectives. Take on your neighbours in magnificent battles on land and at sea. Improved graphics with more detailed characters, animations, buildings and landscapes plus an extensive tutorial makes for quick and easy access for all players to get started.

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PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox

complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

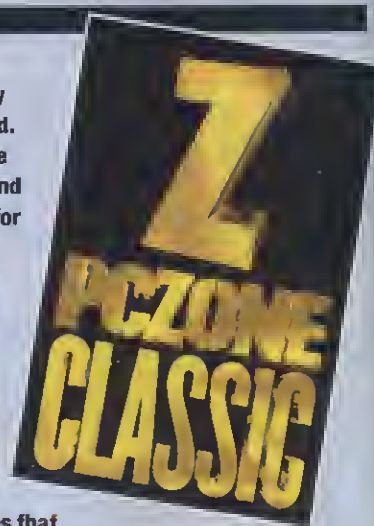
NEWENTRY

In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics.

This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a classic, we *mean* it.



FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #71 • 95%

✦ Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the 'Generations' pack.

PUBLISHER Sierra
• 01189 209100



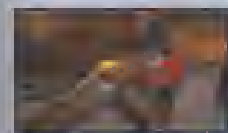
BUDGET

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

PCZ #81 • 90%

✦ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III's* multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

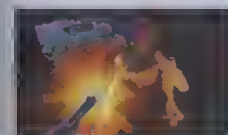


QUAKE III ARENA

PCZ #87 • 89%

✦ The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

PCZ #101 • 85%

NEWENTRY This atmospheric game is one of the most unsettling FPSs we've seen. The graphics and superb sound will have you leaping out of your seat. Here's hoping Barker's contribution will help push the future of narrative and gameplay forward.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



GUNMAN CHRONICLES

PCZ #97 • 84%

✦ While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must buy for any fan of the genre.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 01189 209100

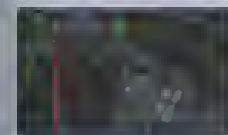


PROJECT IGI

PCZ #97 • 84%

✦ Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage orientated storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



STAR TREK: VOYAGER - ELITE FORCE

PCZ #94 • 84%

✦ The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever CPU team mates give renewed credence to solo play in this increasingly multiplayer genre.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE

PCZ #99 • 82%

✦ This fourth offering in the popular combat series is a feast of superb graphics, challenging missions and er... realistic snow. The multiplayer option is great and features some excellent team-based modes, but like all big robot games, it's still only likely to sell in America.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000



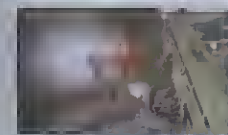
BUDGET

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

PCZ #88 • 82%

✦ The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

PCZ #89 • 79%

✦ More like an arcade explosion of unmitigated violence than an FPS in the *Half-Life* mould, *SoF* is a great deal of fun. It's also very sick. If you can stomach amputations and decapitations, then we can guarantee you some pure, mindless entertainment.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

STRATEGY

BLACK & WHITE

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #100 • 95%

One of our joint top games of all time, *Black & White* is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI-enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
• 01753 549442

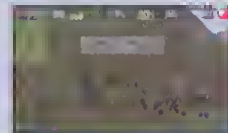


Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

PCZ #101 • 90%

NEWENTRY Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast paced in-your-face action that allows you to get down and dirty quite early on. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse driven, it's simple and easy to get into. What more could you ask for?

PUBLISHER EON • 0700 4366344



SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

PCZ #89 • 90%

✦ Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate enemy generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options never get in the way of instant playability. *Shogun* will blow you away.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

PCZ #101 • 89%

NEWENTRY There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement and a 3D landscape with real physics modelling make it truly absorbing. With great graphics and sound effects to boot it's an essential purchase.

PUBLISHER CDV • 0208 880 4144



AOE: COLLECTORS' EDITION

PCZ #84 • 88%

✦ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOE II*, the gameplay has been honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and opt for this classic RTS.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

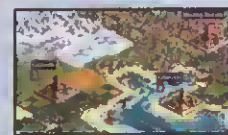


GROUND CONTROL

PCZ #92 • 86%

✦ RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 01189 20 9100



CALL TO POWER II

PCZ #98 • 85%

✦ *Civilization II* is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official Civ endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



SUDDEN STRIKE

PCZ #96 • 85%

✦ *Sudden Strike* mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.

PUBLISHER CDV • 0208 860 4144

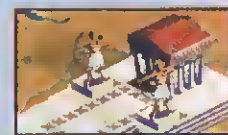


HOMEWORLD: CATAclysm

PCZ #96 • 85%

✦ Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld* has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 01189 209100



ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

PCZ #97 • 83%

✦ From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is hugely addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.

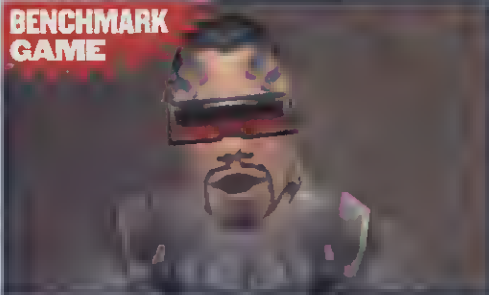
PUBLISHER Sierra • 01189 209 100

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

ACTION/ADVENTURES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #93 • 94%

➤ Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
• 020 8636 3000

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #71 • 88%

➤ If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts
• 020 7368 2255



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

PCZ #80 • 91%

➤ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

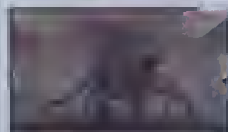


DISCWOULD NOIR

PCZ #79 • 87%

➤ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7258 3791

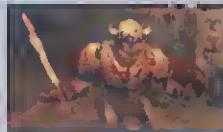


VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - REDEMPTION

PCZ #92 • 89%

➤ This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000



SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

PCZ #98 • 87%

➤ Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814 132



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ #87 • 87%

➤ An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorching of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

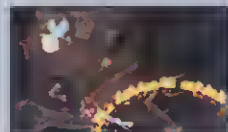


THE NOMAD SOUL

PCZ #83 • 86%

➤ Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

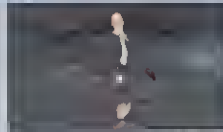


BALDUR'S GATE II

PCZ #96 • 85%

➤ The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

PCZ #98 • 85%

➤ Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



FINAL FANTASY VII

PCZ #66 • 80%

➤ Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it should be out on budget soon.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR

PCZ #96 • 84%

➤ As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

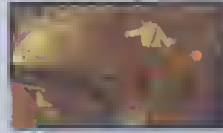


FALLOUT 2

PCZ #71 • 79%

➤ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

PCZ #84 • 83%

➤ LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest *Indy*, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 700



DIABLO II

PCZ #93 • 72%

➤ Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever.

PUBLISHER Havas Interactive • 01189 209100

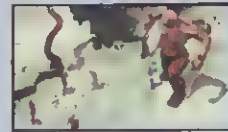


ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

PCZ #98 • 82%

➤ One of the hardest skills to master when developing a game is the ability to make your audience genuinely laugh with you rather than at you, and undoubtedly *Escape From Monkey Island* is one of the most genuinely funny games to come out for the last couple of years.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 700



ICEWIND DALE

PCZ #93 • 75%

➤ Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but no competition to *BG2*.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN

PCZ #98 • 82%

➤ It's not often that a game with little promise on paper surprises us so nicely. *DS9* is a third-person action/adventure that offers you the chance to control Sisko, Kira or Worf. Gameplay is different for each character, which provides longevity in spades.

PUBLISHER Infinite Loop/Koch • 01256 707767



ODIUM

PCZ #87 • 70%

➤ Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences à la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Odium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked for a while.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000



METAL GEAR SOLID

PCZ #96 • 82%

➤ Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #98 • 86%

With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how 2.0 would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is it.

PUBLISHER Codemasters
• 01926 814132

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

PCZ #96 • 84%

Buckle up for some high-speed driving action, as you race around the streets of London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original *MM* was a better, but with more cars and races, and improved controls, *MM2* is the new daddy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000

PCZ #97 • 82%

While lacking the detailed realism of *GP3*, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenalin pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

LE MANS 24 HOURS

PCZ #87 • 81%

Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.

PUBLISHER Intergames • 020 7738 8199

GRAND PRIX 3

PCZ #94 • 80%

This F1 title displays all the customary Grand Prix perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated *GP2*, but it that's what you're after you'll love it.

PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

INSANE

PCZ #97 • 78%

Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000

PCZ #90 • 78%

Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

RALLY MASTERS

PCZ #89 • 77%

Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.

PUBLISHER Intergames • 020 7738 8199

TOCA 2

PCZ #76 • 76%

Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but it is let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

PCZ #84 • 75%

Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it is let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #99 • 89%

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, and though the graphics and general gameplay may not be groundbreaking, *Battle Of Britain* is one of the best examples of a game that transports you right into the cockpit. Tally ho!

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
• 020 8343 7337

FALCON 4

PCZ #72 • 89%

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing still.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS:
THE MIGHTY 8TH

PCZ #96 • 87%

B17 reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.

PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive/Microprose • 01454 893893

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2

PCZ #97 • 87%

If WWII dog fighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics all come together to create a true sense of excitement and realism.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR

PCZ #68 • 85%

This updated version of O'D's masterpiece may seem a bit superfluous for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title, now available on budget.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DAI • 0161 832 6633

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET

PCZ #83 • 84%

If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure to watch out for friendly fire.

PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400

MIG ALLEY

PCZ #80 • 84%

Mig Alley gives hardcore flight simmers a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III

PCZ #82 • 83%

For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the *Flight Sim* series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CRIMSON SKIES

PCZ #96 • 82%

This game moves away from the detailed simulation mould of so many plane games, and concentrates more on all-out dogfighting. It's instantly gratifying, fast paced, entertaining and adds a much needed twist of humour to an otherwise serious genre.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

FLANKER 2.0

PCZ #85 • 82%

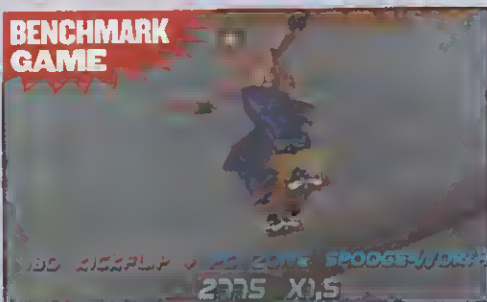
Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yankee blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding nevertheless, *Flanker 2.0* recreates the real thing in minute detail. However, be warned: hours of practice are needed before you can go off shooting stuff.

PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300

SPORTS

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #98 • 88%

Pro Skater 2 is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break every bone as he smashes his face against the concrete. Oh, and the music's fantastic too.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000



VIRTUAL POOL 3

VP3 has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeannette Lee. And with 18 different pool games it's a must for pool fanatics.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423 666

PCZ #99 • 85%



FIFA 2001

Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly make over. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are immaculate.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

PCZ #97 • 83%



SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 8738 8199

PCZ #85 • 83%



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

PCZ #92 • 82%



NOA LIVE 2000

As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

PCZ #85 • 82%



OPEN TENNIS 2000

Not since *Super Tennis* on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball back and forth over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. Incredibly playable and unsurpassed in multiplayer.

PUBLISHER Cyro • 0121 250 5070

PCZ #92 • 81%



JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2

The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates and, when you're tired of the balze, you can move round and have a go on the fully-featured darts board instead. Saves going down to the Working Men's Club.

PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive • 020 7368 2255

PCZ #68 • 78%



ACTUA SOCCER 3

If you can't get on with *FIFA* then *Actua* is the second port of call for footy fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which goes a long way to helping maintain its shelf life.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

PCZ #72 • 72%



MILLENNIUM GAMES

Everyone remembers the good old days of Daley Thompson's joystick-wagging *Decathlon*. Sergei Bubka might not have quite the same pedigree, but this athletics simulation is loads of fun nonetheless and should keep you entertained for a while.

PUBLISHER Midas • 01782 633500

PCZ #93 • 65%

MANAGEMENT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #96 • 93%

This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



THE SIMS

This game offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

PCZ #87 • 85%

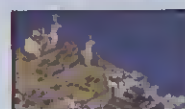


CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

PCZ #70 • 84%

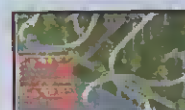


SIMCITY 3000

Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

PCZ #74 • 83%



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RT* is hugely addictive.

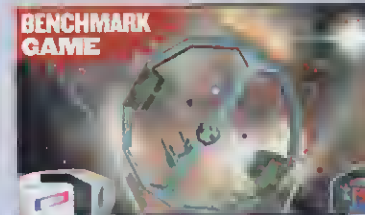
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

PCZ #75 • 82%

SPACE COMBAT

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #82 • 87%

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656



TERMINUS

Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*.

PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com

PCZ #93 • 86%



Freespace 2

Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4222

PCZ #84 • 85%



X-WING: ALLIANCE

At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

PCZ #77 • 81%



STARLANCER

While *Starlancer* doesn't do anything startlingly new, it is a highly polished affair with compulsive gameplay and gorgeous visuals. A must for space sim fans.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

PCZ #91 • 80%

3D ACTION/STRATEGY**HIDDEN & DANGEROUS****BENCHMARK
GAME****BUDGET****PCZ #79 • 90%**

☛ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**HOSTILE WATERS****PCZ #101 • 87%****NEW ENTRY**

A brilliant RTS/action game that you can play purely statistically. However, you can also leap into a unit and get involved in the action. It's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options though.

PUBLISHER Rage • 01512 372200**GIANTS****PCZ #95 • 85%**

☛ This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666**SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION****PCZ #97 • 84%**

☛ AI doesn't come much better. The spectacular graphics and command system come alive with this edition. Although not as much fun as *Counter-Strike*, it's more realistic, and features five new maps and countless weapon configurations.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100**ROGUE SPEAR****PCZ #84 • 83%**

☛ We loved *Rainbow Six* and, although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**ONLINE ONLY****COUNTER-STRIKE V1.0****BENCHMARK
GAME****PCZ #98 • 93%**

☛ The most widely tested game ever finally comes out of its Beta stage. Most people had reservations about the new models, but you soon get used to their camp animations and begin to appreciate how much more detailed they are. You can expect to see the game improving, as the V1.0 tag suggests there will be plenty of updates in the future.

DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net**EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK****PCZ #92 • 90%**

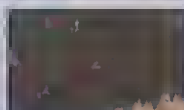
☛ The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better. Chris Andersen has spent months casting spells with hundreds of other people and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000**ALLEGIANCE****PCZ #91 • 82%**

☛ The first true online-only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, coordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000**ASHERON'S CALL****PCZ #88 • 76%**

☛ The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in real life, it's a great tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000**ULTIMA ONLINE: RENAISSANCE****PCZ #92 • 75%**

☛ It's been at the top for a while, but now that the sequel is on the way the original looks dated. *Renaissance* isn't enough of an improvement for it to compete with *EverQuest*—online RPGs are moving on.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442**PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS****DOOM**

☛ This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.

**ULTIMA VII**

☛ Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.

**ULTIMA UNDERWORLD**

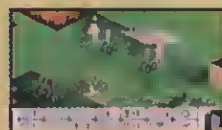
☛ We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.

**DUNE II**

☛ If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles is testament to its staying power.

**SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER**

☛ EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.

**UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN**

☛ This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

**MAGIC CARPET**

☛ Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

**WING COMMANDER**

☛ The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people ever learn?

**TOMO RAIDER**

☛ She might be getting a hit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?

**CIVILIZATION**

☛ The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

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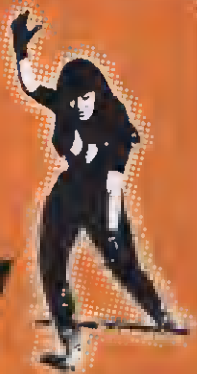
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CD-ROM HELP Phone Interchange on 0152 5711 482 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk. Please do NOT phone the PC ZONE office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
- Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D-accelerator only.

DISCLAIMER

- This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
- Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) which may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.



DEMOS CD ZONE 1



Better than rubber ducks at bathtime.



Line 'em up and knock 'em down.

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

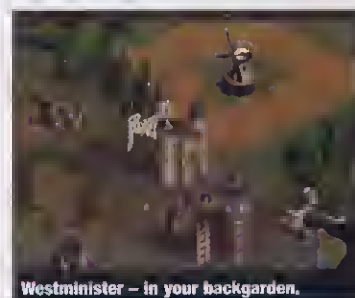
CDV

CUSTOM-MADE WORLD EXCLUSIVE

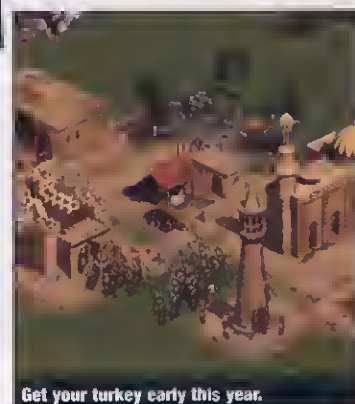
You can't get too much of a good thing, with the possible exception of tequila, and this absorbing, historical RTS gives you not one but 8,000 good things to manipulate in this exclusive playable demo. Prepare for more Cossacks than ever before, with an extensive tutorial and a random map generator for both single and multiplayer modes. Make sure your mates get a copy too, and take a few packed lunches because you're going to be gone for some time.

Controls

Menu	F12
Enlarge/decrease mini-map	M
Bring on/remove game info	I
Bring on/remove object info	U
Show/hide impassable areas	Q
Delete the objects outlined	Del
Increase game speed	Ctrl+D
Chat	Enter
Select all units	Ctrl+A
Select all ships	Ctrl+S
Select all buildings	Ctrl+B



Westminster – in your backgarden.



Get your turkey early this year.



THE MOON PROJECT

Ubi Soft

Immerse yourself in this 3D RTS demo of the official sequel to the superb *Earth 2150*. Play as the moon-based Lunar Corporation – one of three playable factions to appear in the final game – through a tutorial and skirmish mode, and experience the great flavour of a game that looks like being every RTS fan's Nirvana.

Controls

Attack	A	Show Power Grid	F9
Escort	E	Show Command Selection on/off	F10
Hold Position	H	Show Command Markers on/off	F11
Stop	S	Show Tunnel Selection on/off	F12
Supply Request	Y	Pause	Num Lock
Create platoon	P	Increase game speed	Num +
Repeat command	Z	Decrease game speed	Num -
Save Current Game	Left ALT + F2	Default game speed	Num *
Load Game	Left ALT + F3	Create Group	CTRL + #
Quick Save	Left ALT + F1	Select Group	#
Open Unit Construction Panel	F1	Select all visible ground units	, (comma)
Open Research Panel	F2	Select all visible air units	/ (forward slash)
Open Building Upgrade Centre	F3	Select all visible military units	; (semi-colon)
Open Alliance Panel	F3		
Open "Give Money To Allies" Panel	F6		



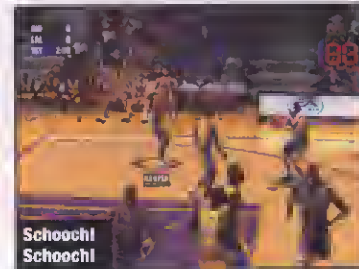
NBA LIVE 2001

EA

NBA Live 2001 is probably one of the best basketball titles available at the moment, and despite its reluctance to incorporate European teams it's blessed with great animation, player interaction and superb tactical play. The demo allows you to play three-minute matches in arcade and simulation mode at four difficulty levels, as well as four types of one-on-one play.

Controls

Joypad/Joystick	
Up/Down/Left/Right	Arrow Keys
Shoot	Right Shift
Pass right	Control
Jump/reb/block	Right shift
Switch	Right Control
Pause	Esc



EVIL ISLANDS

Ubi Soft

Although it's being billed as part strategy, part role-playing adventure, *Evil Islands* is definitely an RPG at its core. Supported by a powerful 3D engine, this demo sees you assuming the role of Zak, a young man who wakes up in a strange land with a typical case of memory loss. Perfect for an afternoon of playing with camera angles, casting spells and killing evil toads.

Controls

Quick Save	F5	Walk	X
Quick Load	F8	Sneak	C
View Quests	Tab	Crawl	V
Pause on/off	Space	Zoom In	Page Up
Take/Steal/Use	S	Zoom Out	Page Down
Aggressive/Defensive Mode	A	Increase Game Speed	Num +
Run	Z	Decrease Game Speed	Num -



COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

Codemasters

This slipped off PCZ 100 somehow, so we're running it again so you can take the winner of our Rally and Off Road Supertest for a spin in this fully playable demo. Despite the fact that this is a fairly old PlayStation game, the PC version does the graphics genuine justice, which add to the already superb driving experience.

Controls

Accelerate	Up Arrow	Gear Up	[
Brake	Down Arrow	Gear Down]
Turn Left	Left Arrow	Rearview	R
Turn Right	Right Arrow	Switch Replay Mode Camera	F1
Handbrake Space	Bar	Change Camera	C



CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER

Ubi Soft

Master a 'snap', a 'grab rail' and the painful sounding 'hard slash' in this demo which allows you to test surf a couple of boards and two surfer dudes. Try your luck on the Sandy Beach sim and the rather more testing Cut Loose Grove. We didn't rate it any more exciting than a granny paddle on Brighton beach, but see what you think.

Controls

Stand/slash	Left Ctrl
Snap/hard slash	Left shift
Launch	Z
Grab rail	Left alt
Pause	Escape
Next camera	Page up
Previous camera	Page down
Movement	Direction arrows



SUPER 1 KARTING

Midas Interactive

Not the most exciting of games to come out of a sporting licence, and only likely to appeal to diehard karting enthusiasts with not a lot else to do with their time. Have a go with this demo in simulation mode and try controlling the bastard little skiddy karts – they handle with about as much reliability as a shopping trolley.

Controls

Keyboard/Mouse/JoyPad/Steering Wheel	
Accelerate	Up arrow/Mouse button 1
Brake	Down arrow/Mouse button 2
Left/right	Left/right arrows/Mouse left/right turn
Choke	A
Reposition kart	Z
Reverse view	M
Pause	Space

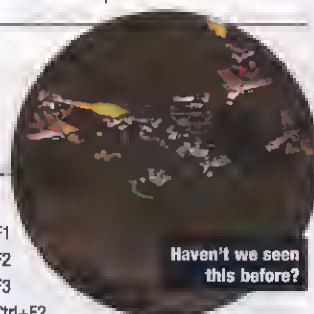
OUTLIVE

Take 2

Outlive is pretty much a Red Alert 2 clone, so it will appeal to fans of the big-lanks-thundering-over-industrial-wastelands type of RTS. That is if you haven't seen it all before. It's a pretty good value demo though, with three mini campaigns and access to the Continuum Game Server, which allows you to play a couple of multiplayer maps online.

Controls

Shortcut keys	F1
Save	F2
Load	F3
Quick Save	Ctrl+F2
Quick Load	Ctrl+F3
Options menu	F4 or Alt+O
Pause	Space
Select all the vehicles in combat	Ctrl+T
Select the terrestrial vehicles in combat	Ctrl+R
Select all aircrafts	Ctrl+A
Select all administrative vehicles	Ctrl+D
Select all vehicles on screen	Ctrl+L



GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO – SEA REAPER DEMO

Interplay

Our second exclusive *Giants* allows you to play as the Delphi, the ethereal sea reaper who can devastate most enemies with her magical bow without even breaking a sweat. This demo sees the delectable Miss D helping to find the lost Smarties for Yan the Samurai Smartie in return for a few nifty magical powers. Once again the graphics are drool inducing and the best reason around to treat yourself to a new graphics card.

Controls

Look up/down: turn left/right	Mouse
Forward	W
Backwards	Z
Left	A
Right	D
Use Weapon/Attack	Left click
Zoom mode	E
Zoom In	Z
Map Mode	C
Select Spell	Left Shift
Turbo Right	Click
Cast Spell	Space
Cycle Weapons	Q/Tab



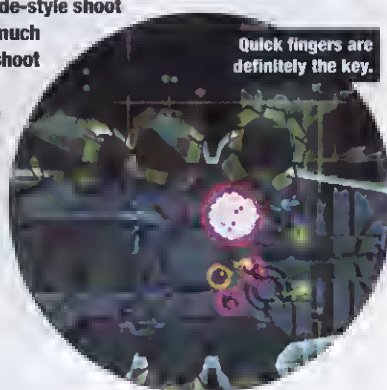


It might be simple, but it's damn addictive stuff.

SPACE TRIPPER

Pom Pom

One of those addictive little spacey, arcade-style shoot 'em ups that you're bound to spend too much time playing. It's simple stuff in theory: shoot everything and avoid getting hit, in a homage-to-*Urldium* type of way. But like most innocent-looking games, it's much trickier than it looks. Good for keeping those fingers nimble.



Quick fingers are definitely the key.

Controls

Left/Right/Up/Down Arrow Keys
Flip directions Z
Fire primary C
Change weapon X
Pause Space



Move along now - nothing to see here!

Captain's Log: Turn right around tea time. Start turn just after Westlax.

STAR TREK STARFLEET COMMAND VOLUME II: EMPIRES AT WAR

Interplay

Star Trek sims undoubtedly occupy the top brackets of the SF genre. Andrew Wright dubbed *Starfleet Command II* "probably the best *Star Trek* space sim around". This demo will allow you to get to grips with the basics of starship

control, which essentially means starting every move about ten minutes before you actually want to do it.

Controls Mouse/Keyboard



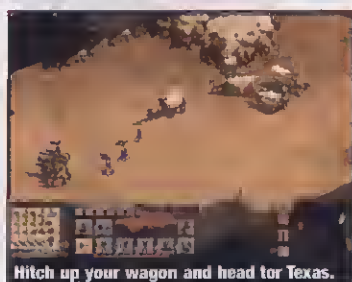
They get guns and we get er... sticks.

HEIST

Virgin Interactive

In this demo you play a lone criminal bailed out of jail under mysterious circumstances, and ordered to perform a few robberies in order to finance a gang of the best scumbags in town. Part isometric RTS and part action-adventure, decide for yourself whether it plays more like *Carry On Constable* or a 1cm-high Tarantino film.

Controls Mouse/keyboard



Hitch up your wagon and head for Texas.

AMERICA

Data Becker

Great graphics and an easy to use interface characterise this latest 'period' RTS, which takes you to, you guessed it, the Wild West, where the men were men and the women were all called Mary-Sue-Jo-Ellen. This demo gives you a crack at two mini scenarios: playing as the Indians in the Revolt Of The Santee Sioux campaign and as the USA in the Trek To Texas.

Controls Mouse/Keyboard



It really is this exciting.



Bushed again.

PATCHES CD1

Half-Life: Opposing Force 1.1.0.4
Sudden Strike 1.2
Swedish Tour Car Championship 2001 v3.0
Swedish Tour Car Championship 2001 v3.1
Sea Dogs 1.05
PBA Tour Bowling 2001 v1.006
Delta Force 3: Land Warrior Update
Starship Troopers: Terrain Ascendancy v1.1 Full Patch
Jet Fighter IV Update 3
Giants: Citizen Kabuto
Battle Isle IV: The Androsia

War v144 to v206
Battle Isle IV: The Androsia War v166 to v206
The Age Of Sail II v1.01
Combat Mission v1.12
Carnivores: Ice Age v2.12
Oxus Ex Single-player Patch
Requiem v1.2
Requiem 1.2 to 1.3 (30FX)
Requiem 1.2 to 1.3 (30FX) (30)
Requiem 1.2 to 1.3 (Software)
No One Lives Forever Update #2
Majesty Update 4
Squad Leader v1.1

UTILITIES CD1

DirectX 8.0 for Windows 95/98
Millennium
Windows Media Play v7.0 (requires

Win 98/2000/ME & IE4 or better)
Windows Media Player v7.0
LiveWare 3.0 for Win 95/98

MOD WATCH CD2

Unreal Fortress 420 - Unreal's finest mod? You decide.
Half-Life Paintball v2.0 Beta - Just when you thought *Half-Life* couldn't get any better.
UT Rocket Arena v1.6 - Rocket Arena

for Unreal Tournament. Get it on.
Sven Co-op v1.9 - Cooperative missions for *Half-Life*.
Half-Life Canned Tuna - Weird name, useful mod.
Sin UT - A great Unreal mod.

EXTENDED PLAY CD2

Turn to page 142 where Tony Lamb gives you the lowdown on the new *Counter-Strike* maps pack, new courses for *PGA Championship Golf 2000* plus *Unreal Tournament*.

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Arcade PC

The Ultimate Game Cabinet

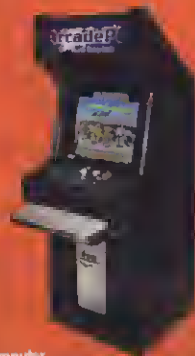
Introducing the ArcadePC mini Cabinet "The Ultimate Game Cabinet"

The ArcadePC is a home based take on the original design of a real arcade cabinet.

By playing those original arcade games in the ArcadePC cabinet, you can recapture that true classic arcade experience from the comfort of your own home or office. Simply install your PC into the ArcadePC, and plug in the built in 19" high resolution monitor and the control panel and create an experience like no other. A hidden keyboard pullout drawer allows you to have access to your keyboard and mouse at all times for PC applications.

The ArcadePC was designed for use with retro emulation programs such as M.A.M.E. (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator), Retrocade and commercial release titles such as Microsoft's "Return of the Arcade", and Hasbro's "Atari's Greatest Hits #1" all of which will run on your Personal Computer as well as breathing new life into half life, racing games etc.

Put these great PC based games in the ArcadePC cabinet and it's like a real arcade machine brought to your home or office!



Shown here is the Arcade PC cabinet in black with HotRod SE controller



★★★★★ 5 stars-computer and video games magazine

"the best joystick you'll ever get your palms around" "the ultimate joystick" PC FORMAT MAGAZINE

Shown above is the best-selling HotRod joystick that comes bundled with an Arcade PC with dedicated MAME support and is available to purchase separately.

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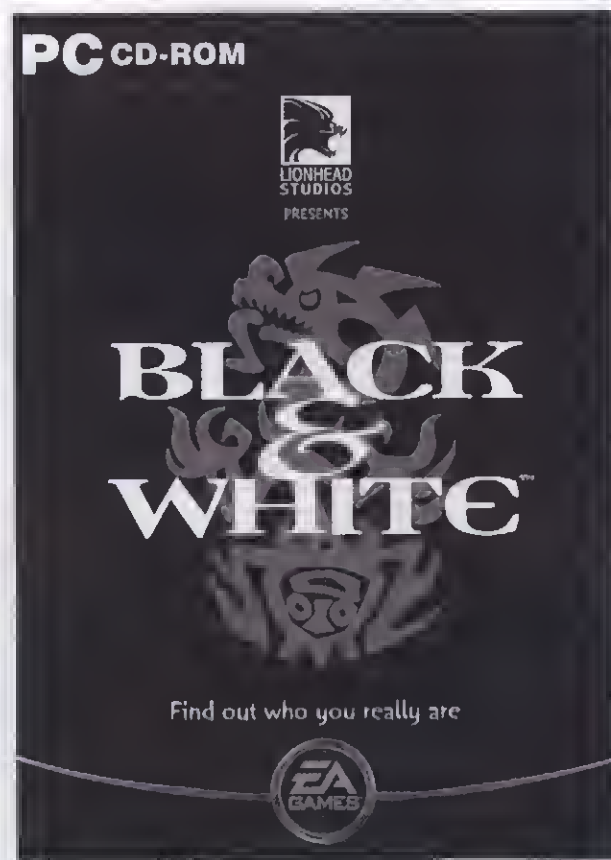
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Gazing back in time to the home computer revolution

★ STUCK IN THE '80S Keith Pullin

HEADLINES: FEBRUARY 1985

59 people die when Egyptian commandos stormed the hijacked Egyptair Boeing 737 at Luga airport, Malta • Nelson Mandela's imminent release is rumoured • The Prince and Princess Of Wales visit the USA • French Secret Service agents sink the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior • President Reagan is given a live turkey for Thanksgiving

STARQUAKE

As the Crow flies

Programmed by the genius that was (and hopefully still is somewhere) Steve Crow, *Starquake* was in our opinion the best game to ever grace the late Spectrum 48k.

The idea of this frantic shoot 'em up was simple; after crash landing on an unstable world, you had to locate nine pieces of the planet core in order to stop the planet exploding.

Along the way your diminutive spaceman had to blast his way through a staggering variety of indigenous creatures, build bridges over chasms

with a clever auto-bridging device and use teleporters to speed up his progress through the planet's deadly interior.

With its gorgeous graphics, massive play area, subtle trading strategies and ultra-smooth gameplay it was simply impossible to put down. Even now when it comes to sheer uncompromising enjoyment there are few games to match it – on any format. If you don't believe us download a spectrum emulator and play it now – we defy you to have only one go...



A sign of things to come...



Feeling nostalgic yet?



Hovering along nicely in 1995.



The Spectrum 48k at its colourful best.

THE BEST OF THE REST



ELITE
(BBC, Spectrum, C64)

The greatest space-trading game of all time was originally released for the BBC Micro. Its success led to conversions for both the Spectrum and the Commodore 64 where it was considered as equally enthralling. With *Elite 4* mooted for release sometime this decade there appears to be no end to the timelessness of this game.



MARSPORT
(Spectrum)

Revolutionary animation techniques made this one of the most graphically advanced games of its time. Sadly, it was too damn hard with most gamers never progressing further than the second corridor on the right. If anybody did complete it they were immediately revered as heroes and showered with Cadbury Wispas.



GAUNTLET
(Arcade)

Gauntlet was one of the first arcade machines from Atari. The colourful and detailed overhead graphics coupled with its brilliant level designs made it a true phenomena. In fact, *Gauntlet* was way ahead of its time; its main theme of simultaneous four-player action incorporating characters with different skills is a concept that is still alive and kicking today.



PARATROID
(C64)

This mixture of arcade-style blasting and intriguing sub-games from Hewson Consultants made this one of the hits of 1985. The idea of salvaging parts from robots in order to create your own super robot was original and compelling and led to a host of remakes and a successful conversion onto the Spectrum where the game was renamed *Quazatron*.

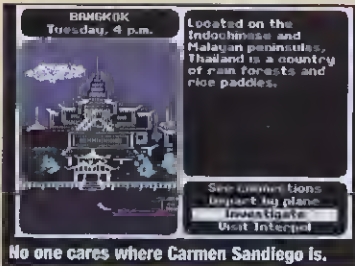


ULTIMA IV: THE QUEST OF THE AVATAR
(PC DOS)

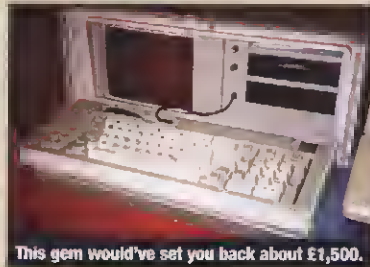
The *Ultima* series got worse the longer it went on and this fourth instalment was probably one of the best Mr Garriott had to offer. Instead of concentrating purely on experience and levelling up, *Ultima IV* employed a true RPG approach where the player was rewarded for performing righteous deeds. Just where did it all go wrong?

PAST FORWARD

GAMING NEWS FOR NOVEMBER '85



No one cares where Carmen Sandiego is.



This gem would've set you back about £1,500.



The Russians eventually took over the world.

★ After a two-year delay, Microsoft finally released Windows v1.03 for IBM compatible computers. About 85 per cent of the coding was in C and it was estimated that more than 110,000 programming hours were put into the project, unlike today where the project consists of 110,000 bugs. The retail price of this pioneering operating system was a mere £79.99. Curiously, just before its release Seattle Computer Products sold all DOS rights to Microsoft for just US\$925,000.

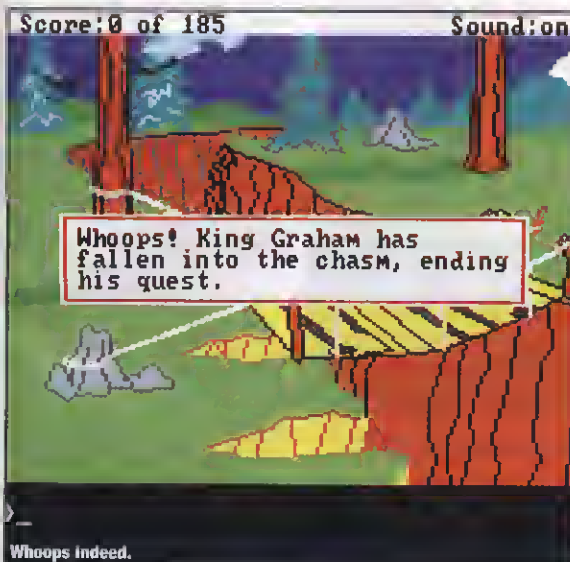
★ Broderbund Software published *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego*, which later spawned a series of games that sold more than four million units over the next ten years – and they were all crap.

★ With the Cold War in full swing an entirely different Russian threat emerged – its name was *Tetris*. Dr Alexey Pajitnov developed the game at the Moscow Academy of Computer

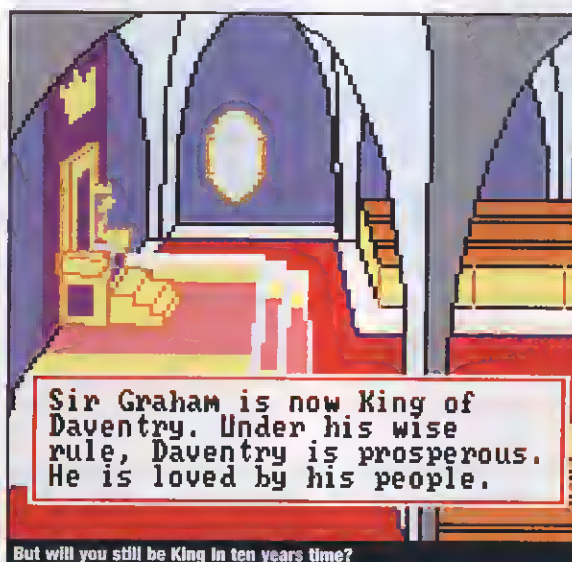
Science as a way to entertain himself and his comrades should Vodka supplies run low in the event of nuclear war. He named his game *Tetris* due to the way the player had to strategically place falling blocks known as 'tetraminos'. It was eventually released on more than 200 formats.

★ Despite the great console crash of 1984 Nintendo released the 8bit Nintendo Entertainment System. The unsightly grey box came with two game controllers, a light-gun and ROB – the Robotic Operating Buddy who bore a striking resemblance to the robotic misfit in the film *Short Circuit*.

★ Some notable companies were also founded around this time, including America OnLine Inc (AOL); Capcom Company Ltd; American Megatrends Inc; Novalogic Inc and a certain Westwood Studios who later went on to create a couple of half-decent strategy games.



Whoops indeed.



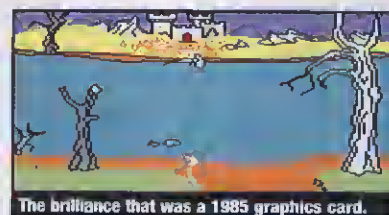
But will you still be King in ten years time?

KING'S QUEST II: ROMANCING THE THRONE

The female of the species

Roberta Williams was convinced that people wanted elves, goblins, magical kingdoms and all that malarkey for their brand spanking new 4.77Mhz PCs – and she was right.

Released only a year after the amazing success of *King's Quest*, this sequel was more of the same, but nobody cared. As far as they were concerned the thrill of walking around a fantasy 3D landscape portrayed in 16 glorious colours was exactly the reason why they'd shelled out for their PCs in the first place.



The brilliance that was a 1985 graphics card.

At the time the graphics really were state of the art, which was good because the plot of *KQ2* certainly wasn't. Basically the good King Graham needs a good lady wife to do the cooking and to provide a few heirs. One day, while gazing at his gorgeous EGA features in his magic mirror, he sees the image of a beautiful Princess imprisoned in a glass tower in a far away land. King Graham reckons she'll do the job nicely and so sets off on a perilous quest to find her. Ahhh, innocence – what a beautiful thing.

WE'LL MISS YOU

The end of an era

Towards the end of 1985 computers like the Spectrum 48k, BBC Micro, Commodore 64 and IBM PCs were rapidly replacing video consoles as a means of home entertainment – but the consoles weren't quite dead yet. Major machines of the time included the long-serving Atari VCS, which had been around since 1977 and Mattel's Intellivision. The latter included technology such as PlayCable, a 24-hour service delivering games into the home via Cable TV.

Another one was the Milton Bradley/GCE Vectrex. It was \$199 and came with an inbuilt Vector graphics monitor and used a Motorola 68A09 8bit processor. Despite the fact that it never really caught on, Vectrex games are still being released.

TOP 5 1985

SPECTRUM

- 1 DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON
- 2 COMBAT LYNX
- 3 UNDERWURLDE
- 4 PYJAMARAMA
- 5 MONTY MOLE

COMMODORE 64 GAMES

- 1 DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON
- 2 CNILLER
- 3 SELECT GAMES ONE
- 4 BEACH-HEAD
- 5 JET SET WILLY

Compiled by C+VG

EXTENDED PLAY

Sink your teeth into this little beauty. This month we've been feeling extra generous and we're giving you three games to tweak and add to

★ WORDS Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF



The *Counter-Strike* maps here are a selection from the best of the unofficial maps we've been (ahem)

testing solidly for the past few months. Installing the map pack is simple, as all you have to do is double click on the icon on the CD and enter your *Half-Life* directory as prompted. Then just sit back and wait for them to install. After this, just load up the game and you'll find them all in the map list.

Installation of the *UT* maps is a breeze, with all of the .unr map and .btx text files unzipping into the 'unreal tournament/maps' folder and the .btx textures into the 'unreal tournament/textures' folder.

Installing the *PGA Championship Golf 2000* course maps unfortunately isn't quite as simple as in other games. Create a temporary directory on your hard disk and unzip the various files into it. Then, inside the game select 'Play Golf, Create Game, Course, Course Manager, and Install'. Point the installer at the temporary directory you created and you'll find all the courses. Highlight them, select Install again and put them into the 'PGA2000/Courses' directory. *PGA 2000* will add them to the list of playable courses. Then you can delete them from your temporary directory if you want.

Extended Play on steroids. Not one, not two, but three delicious games given the **PC ZONE** vitamin treatment for prolonging their lifespan. The biggie this month is the outstanding team shooter *Counter-Strike*, which has even overtaken fellow *Half-Life* mod *TFC* as the online game of choice. Close behind is *Unreal Tournament*, another outstanding first-person slaughterhouse and winner of our 2000 Best FPS Readers' Award. And finally, for those of a more peaceful persuasion (yes, you two at the back) a selection of excellent courses for that quality golf sim *PGA Championship 2000*.

COUNTER-STRIKE

If, for any reason, you've never tried *Half-Life* mod *Counter-Strike*, then you really need to get yourself some psychiatric help. Then, once the overpaid man in a white coat has worked out that you aren't really a bad person – just misunderstood – you'll need to go out and buy *Half-Life*, download *Counter-Strike* 1.0 and forget about anything else you ever wanted to do with your life. You are about to spend every waking moment in a battle between good and evil, a non-

stop whirlwind firefight between terrorist and counter-terrorist teams. You'll forget to eat, you'll forget to sleep, you'll forget to blink – everything else will pale into insignificance alongside your desire to win. This mod is seriously addictive.

When you begin a game of *Counter-Strike*, you'll find yourself faced with a choice of two teams – terrorists or counter-terrorists – and each also has a number of skins available. The terrorists are a selection of suitably scruffy yob types but the counter-terrorists get a better choice. Here you can

“The layout, the textures and the sounds are all top notch and well deserving of a place in anyone's *Counter-Strike* library”

choose to be an ultra-cool SAS killer, a gung-ho, burger munching US SEAL, an ultra-efficient German GSG-9 soldier or a French GIGN hard man. The terrorists will then have one of two objectives depending on the map. The first is to place and detonate a bomb, and the second is to prevent the counter-terrorist team from rescuing a bunch of hostages who have been stupid enough to get themselves kidnapped. After that, it's a general fragfest until one team is wiped out and somebody wins.

And the downside? Well, if you're unlucky enough to get wiped out early, you have to wait until the next game begins. Tough luck.

★ CS – ASSAULT2K

by Adam Grebinsky

Filename: cs_assault2k.zip

Size: 1.8Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

The objective in this map is to rescue the hostages hidden inside a room at the top of a warehouse. There are several ways into the warehouse but the terrorists hold the high ground and infiltration by



★ CS – INDIA

by Atomfried

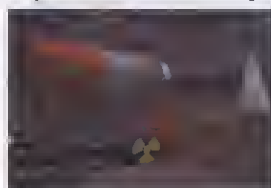
Filename: cs_india.zip

Size: 3.9Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

CS-India is a monster of a map. At 3.9Mb it's the biggest here by a long way, but once you give it a play you'll quickly realise why. No expense has been spared in terms of time or effort in designing it – the layout, the textures and even the sounds are all top-notch and well deserving of a place in anyone's *Counter-Strike* library. It's a hostage rescue map, with four unwitting fools having been grabbed by the terrorists, and it's now up to the counter-terrorist team to release them. It's a shame there aren't more servers running *CS-India*, but hopefully this will change. In the meantime, try to get a LAN game running if you can – it's worth it.

the counter-terrorist team won't be easy. There is a way in via an air conditioning vent on top of the building, but coming in that way is very risky – the best cover is by the back door. If the terrorist team is careful they should win since they have the tactical advantage.



➔ Rescue the hostages hidden in the warehouse.

★ DE-SCUD

by Jeramy Cooke

Filename: de_scud.zip

Size: 1.1Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

Despite not having invented the scud missile, the name will always be associated with Iraq and Saddam Hussein's plan to use it to bomb Israel (and almost anyone else in range). Thanks to the Gulf War that plan didn't work, but there is now a secret American base near the Iraqi border and rather predictably the terrorist team has taken it over and plan to blow it to bits. The counter-terrorist team has to stop them and help protect American interests. A good fun map with plenty of action.



These missiles are the terrorists' target in Scud.



➔ The maze of back alleyways makes India a hard map to master.

★ DE-VILLAGE

by Debugger

Filename: de_village.zip

Size: 1.7Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

Set in a small village, this is a great looking map with some really cool attention to detail. Everything looks nice, with no texture glitches to spoil the effect. Turn the lights down and you'd think you were there. The village layout means that narrow

alleyways are the norm, so expect the action to get pretty frantic. If you're a terrorist you're going to meet the CTs at one of two points. Go left and you need to watch out for the small bridge. Take the other way and you're going to have to fight your way into the tunnel complex. It's possible to climb onto many of the buildings too, so watch out for attacks from above.

★ CS - THUNDER

by Chris Auty

Filename: cs_thunder.zip

Size: 1.8Mb

Rating: ★★

CS-Thunder is an enjoyable hostage rescue map where the action takes place on a dam. It's all very James Bond-ish as you run along the parapet, watching out for your enemies and popping a couple of shots into them if they're stupid enough to let you. One touch worth remembering is that there are in fact two levels to the top of the dam, so if you're on the upper level then just wait for the opposing players to run past beneath you, then hop down behind them and... blam! - ventilated cranium. Again, an air vent provides a risky way in to the hostages.



There's some 'dam' fine action in CS - Thunder.

★ CS - TRAIN RAID

by T1000, Mercury Man and Akuraci

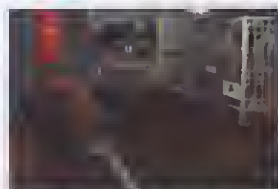
Filename: cs_trainraid.zip

Size: 1.2Mb

Rating: ★★

Train Raid is a hostage rescue map that will make you think twice about using our over-priced

and under-resourced train network in future. The terrorist team is holding a bunch of hostages at the front of the train and the counter-terrorist specialists have to make their way forward from the back end to rescue them. Large, open spaces aren't common on trains - so you'll need to keep your wits about you. The layout makes for lots of frantic action, and although the map isn't the best (some of the ZONE team absolutely hate it), it's different enough to warrant inclusion.



The terrorists control the train - don't hang around here.

★ DE - LUXOR

Filename: de_luxor.zip

by Alex Heerens

Size: 2.0Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

This is a great map with an Egyptian theme and is an old Counter-Strike favourite. The terrorist plan is to devastate the middle of the Egyptian tourist-trap area with a bomb placed either in the tomb or by a group of statues. The counter-terrorist team has to prevent the bombing by either killing all the terrorists before they can plant the bomb, or defusing the bomb and then killing the bad guys. Sound easy? Well, it isn't. The counter-terrorists can get through the map quickly, and although there are three or four different ways to the two bomb sites, the map's perfectly balanced.

★ DE - NSHUTTLE

by MaryBeth

Filename: de_nshuttle.zip

Size: 2.2Mb

Rating: ★★



Luxor has the fantastic atmosphere of old Egypt... but with guns.

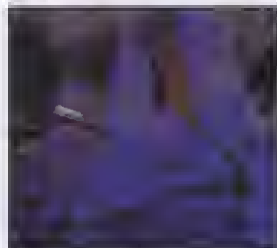


Village is top class. Counter-Strike action all the way.



With textures this good in Village, it's a shame to put a bomb here.

We have to hope that this never happens in real life because it would be a huge publicity scoop for any terrorist group. Basically, the terrorists want to blow up the space shuttle on its launch pad and plan to do this by planting a dirty great big bomb either underneath the main engines or in the control room. The counter-terrorist team has to stop them, but because the action takes place at night it won't be straightforward for either side. Actually, we're not sure we'd want to go up in any spacecraft that had recently been exposed to gunfire, let alone blown up...



You can't fly that... it's got holes in it now.

★ CS - SNOWBASE

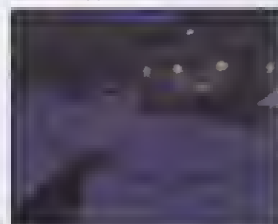
by Veldrin

Filename: cs_snowbase.zip

Size: 808kb

Rating: ★★

A small map, but packed full of fun. The premise to this hostage rescue scenario is that a bunch of terrorists have broken into and taken control of a remote nuclear missile facility. In doing so, they've captured the team of scientists who have the launch codes for the missiles and the counter-terrorist team has to go in and get the scientists out before the terrorists find out how to fire them. It's all good, clean, standard stuff - happens every day, in fact.



Snowbase is a maze of tunnels - brush up your reaction times.

★ SATLAB

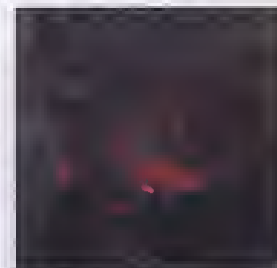
by Edward Fuller

Filename: satlab.zip

Size: 541kb

Rating: ★★

A rather nice looking map with two bomb points for the terrorists to target. It's sometimes a little difficult to see what is going on, and once the fighting starts (which doesn't take long) this problem can make it extremely difficult to survive. However, this is generally a nicely laid out map with plenty of good firefight opportunities.



The terrorist's aim in Satlab is to blow up this satellite.

NET ADDRESSES

If you just can't seem to get enough Counter-Strike check out these websites for more info, news and maps

www.pczone.co.uk

The one-stop tip-top shop for all things PC game related. There are so many great things on our website we might just write a book about it.

www.planethalflife.com/cs/

Probably the biggest name in Half-Life mods, news, reviews and much, much more.

This is the section dedicated to Counter-Strike.

www.counter-strike.net

Get all the latest downloads from the official site.

www.cs-world.net

A website dedicated to Counter-Strike.

www.counter-strike.org

News, reviews, mapping, mods, strategy and more.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

PC ZONE readers obviously love *Unreal Tournament*, voting it the best FPS action game of 2000 and choosing it over classics such as *Half-Life* and *Quake III: Arena*. *Unreal Tournament* is the FPS that many of you think is the coolest of the bunch. So what if more of you play *Counter-Strike* online? *UT* still rocks.

DM - ALCATRAZ

Filename: dm-alcataz.zip
Size: 2.8Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

DM-Alcatraz is a great Deathmatch arena based around the infamous prison island of the same name. The attention to detail is first class, with even the electric chair putting in an appearance. You can fight your way through the dining rooms (the food here will kill you eventually), around the prison out to the landing jetty and then back inside and down into the fetid lower levels. There are plenty of power-ups to keep the action going and a superb overall feel to the map.



① Alcatraz is an imposing map. It's no place for a holiday.

AS - Asthenosphere

Filename: as-asthenosphere.zip
Size: 2.2Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

As - Asthenosphere is a great assault-themed map set on board a spaceship. The objective is to destroy a set of reactor cooling fans and then take control of the ship before getting away in an

escape pod. Naturally, the opposing team will try to stop you. The map is well designed – albeit simply – with plenty of health and armour around to prolong the action.



① The objective in Asthenosphere is to escape in this lifepod.

AS - BRIDGE

Filename: as-bridge.zip

Size: 1.5Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

The assault objective is to destroy the bridge in question, but this is no easy task. This is a big, complicated mission and easy to fail. There are automated defences to avoid but lots of armour and health fixes should mean that you don't get yourself killed too quickly. Remember to check your F3 key at the start to find out your exact mission.



① Once you're on the bridge, place the charges and run like hell.

CTF - BARANCO

Filename: ctf-baranco.zip

Size: 3.8Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

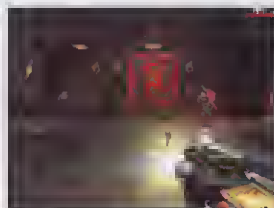
This is a top-notch Capture The Flag setting for anyone who likes big maps. The two opposing bases are superbly drawn and detailed with a wealth of funnels and corridors to ensure hectic

CTF-HORUS



The Egyptian theme in Horus is very neat – it really works.

in-yeer-face action as well as some outdoor areas where there is nowhere to hide if you're running with an enemy flag. You'll need lots of players to make this map worthwhile, so load it up with bots or get a large LAN game running to get the most out of it



① You'll see loads of action in CTF - Baranco.

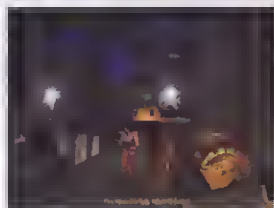
CTF - GAZPACHO

Filename: ctf-gazpacho.zip

Size: 686Kb

Rating: ★★★★★

Gazpacho is small by CTF standards but acquits itself well next to these 2-3Mb monsters. The size of the map means that frantic action is never far away and with the two bases looking like they're only a matter of feet from each other you will be back in the thick of it very quickly even if you do die. Limited approach routes to the flags make defence a little too easy, but other than that, it's great fun.



① The opposing bases are incredibly close in Gazpacho

CTF - HORUS

Filename: ctf-horus.zip

Size: 2.1Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

CTF-Horus is an absolute treat for anyone who thinks that pyramids and hieroglyphics are cool. It has a nice blend of dimly lit corridors and outdoor sections, with lily-filled pools of water for you to keep your feet cool in. There is an adequate spread of power-up goodies dotted about and a few vantage points to make the sniper rifle a useful tool. The attention to detail is the most attractive feature of this map, the linear approach to the flags is its single letdown. Top stuff.

CTF - LOCUSTWIND

Filename: ctf-locustwind.zip

Size: 2.5Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

Locustwind is another medium sized CTF map and a nice blend between in-yeer-face close quarters blasting and some outdoors long-range mania. There are even a couple of sniper points, although the view from inside them is rather limited. You'll need a lot of players to get the most from this map, but it's worth it.



① Locustwind is a fun mix of indoor and outdoor fighting.

DM - ICEOTOXIN

Filename: dm-iceotoxin.zip

Size: 1.9Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

DM-Iceotoxin is a medium-sized deathmatch arena set in an arctic environment. The layout lends itself to last and furious action

with loads of weaponry and health laying around. It's great non-stop fun and ideal for deathmatch – you're always right on top of the action and you'll never have time to pause for thought. Set the bots to 'adept' or higher, take a deep breath and wade in.



① The sniper point in Iceotoxin is very satisfying.

DM - GENJ

Filename: dm-genj.zip

Size: 208kb

Rating: ★★★★★

Anything by *UT* mapping legend Cedric 'Inox' Fiorentino is bound to be good, and DM - Genj is no different – despite its measly 208kb size. As with any Inox map, the attention to detail is superb and creates an imposing alien atmosphere. It has a simple-yet-effective layout and enough action to keep anyone happy. The reduced gravity makes for easy jumping and reduced falling damage, while the limited weapons mean that everyone wants to get to the same places at the same time. Mayhem.



① Genj has nowhere to hide – you can't run away forever!

NET ADDRESSES

Get ready for some *Unreal* action, news and reviews with these handy sites

www.pczone.co.uk

The one-stop tip-top shop for all things PC game related. There are so many great things on our website we might just write a book about it.

www.planetunreal.com

Everything *UT* related starts here. News, reviews, files, mods, skins, screens... if you want anything *UT* related – this is where to look.

<http://www.planetunreal.com/cliffyb/>

A superb source for *UT* maps. Cliffyb only takes the best and serves them up for you to download. Bookmark it.

<http://www.planetunreal.com/nalcity/>

Another great source for maps that you'd be silly to miss.

<http://www.planetunreal.com/inox/>

All hail... the website of *UT* mapper extraordinaire Cedric 'Inox' Fiorentino. Play his maps, and you're sure to be impressed.

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

Golf's a tunny old game. Grown men and women knocking little balls about with big sticks for the sake of having the smallest 'handicap', the most 'birdies' and the fewest 'bogey's'. Unfortunately, golf is also wildly popular and dangerously addictive. Many of us make no apologies for being 'fair weather' players – we have no desire to spend a morning dodging lightning strikes. For us, a gentle stroll over immaculately cultivated fairways and lovingly manicured greens is a relaxing and enjoyable way to pass a sunny day. We make appreciative comments about each other's play, commiserate when a stray ball lands in the rough and assist enthusiastically in the victory celebrations in the bar afterwards – the so-called '19th hole'.

Today, Sierra Sports' superb *PGA Championship Golf 2000* is the daddy. There is no better way to enjoy the world's best courses without the cost of travelling. Back in issue 99, the combined powers of the *PC ZONE* team sat down with only beer and fatty food for comfort to discuss the relative strengths of the current crop of Golf sims, and decided that *PGA 2000* was indeed the dog's danglies of the genre.

★ AMAROO ISLAND

Filename: amaroo.zip

Size: 20.5Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

The first of Voyer Koreis' courses here, Amaroo Island is a treat.

Beautiful blue seas, tropical surroundings, sounds of exotic birds and insects, and more than enough tricks and traps to send the unwary golfer into despair. This is not a course for long-shot play unless you're very skilled. There are dramatic elevation changes as you proceed around the course and many of the greens run unforgivingly fast if you're too eager with the club. Overall a great course but one to be very wary of.



① The course at Amaroo is one to treat with respect.

★ BALMORAL LINKS

Filename: balmoral.zip

Size: 23.1Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

Master course designer Voyer Koreis does it again with another exercise in creativity. He obviously likes his seaside vistas and Balmoral Links is a tropical treat. The deep blue seas crash against rocky outcrops and tropical flora and fauna make up a fascinating and exotic backdrop to the game.

Balmoral Links is beset with water hazards and you'll have to be especially careful not to wind up in one. One Tee is even on an island and you'll have to drive far and accurately to reach the fairway. Several greens are similarly positioned to make

accuracy all-important. Bunkers around the course are deep and unforgiving, repeatedly grabbing the ball when you try to get back out to the fairways, which are the only golfer-friendly parts.



① The spectators at Balmoral... not watching me surely?

★ BOHEMIAN LAKES

Filename: blakes.zip

Size: 22.3Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

By now you should be getting the feel for a course by Voyer Koreis – it's going to be difficult but visually stunning – and Bohemian Lakes has both of these attributes by the ton. With a Bavarian-style feel and a beautiful Alpine backdrop, this course keeps up the Koreis values of looking ever so pretty to the fore while luring the player into a woefully misplaced feeling of confidence.

Bohemian Lakes has less in the way of the vicious elevation changes seen in some of Koreis' designs and this means that you can at least see the flag more clearly – as well as the water hazards in the way. They do have a benefit though, reflecting the castles dotted about the course quite beautifully. So if you're having a nightmare round you can at least enjoy the scenery.

NET ADDRESSES

If you're not in the mood for heading outdoors and hitting the fairways for real, sit back and get clicking on these sites

www.pczone.co.uk

The one-stop tip-top shop for all things PC game related. There are so many great things on our website we might just write a book about it.

www.aarti.itgo.com

The homepage of Voyer Koreis, designer of the Amaroo Island, Balmoral Links and Bohemian Lakes courses.

www.web.ukonline.co.uk/kf.baker/start/index.html

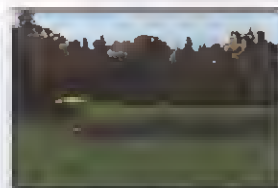
The homepage of K F Baker, designer of the St Andrews course.

www.copyrightclub.durcomworks.net/2kcourses.htm

A great resource for maps for *PGA 1999* and *PGA 2000*. Dozens of courses, news, reviews and more. Probably the best organised resource for *PGA* stuff and an essential bookmark for all fans.

www.coursedepot.com

Another great resource for maps.



① Bohemian Lakes. Water hazard and a castle. Won't be easy.

★ ST. ANDREWS OLD COURSE

Filename: standrw.zip

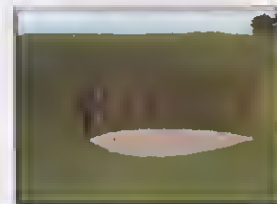
Size: 11.7Mb

Rating: ★★★★★

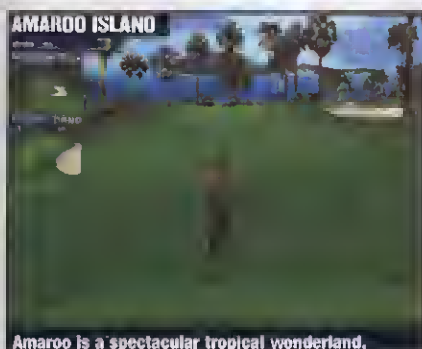
Another master designer for *PGA Championship Golf 2000* is K F Baker, and this is his interpretation of the most famous golf course in the world – The Royal & Ancient Old Course at St Andrews in Scotland. This is the birthplace of the game and a Mecca for golf fans from around the world.

This is a very accurate representation of the course, from its seaside location (which gets

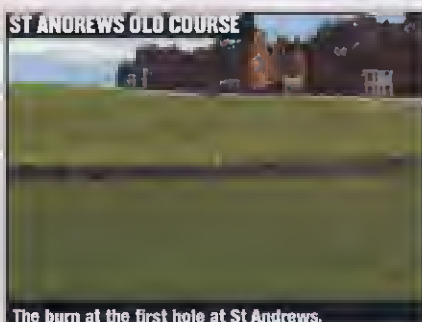
extremely cold and windy as it happens), to the lumpy and bumpy fairways, devilishly deep bunkers and unforgiving greens. On the first Tee you must drive the ball hard and straight or you'll end up in the burn, and as you pass the midway point you'll even hear the sounds of the seabirds as the course runs close to the North Sea. The 18th hole has the world famous clock tower dominating the skyline, and this is your aiming point. Unfortunately, you can't see any of the good pubs that are just along there, but you can't have everything.



① One of the St Andrews bunkers claims another victim.



Amaroo is a 'spectacular tropical wonderland'.



The burn at the first hole at St Andrews.



Bohemian Lakes is a beautiful and well-designed course.

COMMENT



Napster's closing down and pay-per-play could be here sooner than you think. As usual, you get nowt for nowt in this world

★ COUNTING THE PENNIES Dave Woods

Last month the US courts finally managed to start shutting down the massively popular file-swapping service, Napster. In a court case that was started by durge-masters, Metallica, it quickly became apparent that those with the money had entirely missed the point... yet again.

Point one. On the few occasions (honest) that I've downloaded tracks from the Internet, I've used the experience as a try-before-I-buy system. If I like something that I've downloaded I'll go out and buy the album, usually about five seconds later using the same browser. By stopping Napster from distributing copyrighted tracks, record company bosses have dramatically cut down the number of people who can hear their artists' music, and thus the potential number of sales. Anyway, banning Napster isn't going to stop file-sharing on the Internet, it's just going to move it somewhere else.

Point two. Napster has been offering to charge for copyrighted downloads, effectively providing extra revenue for the artists involved. Of course, the record companies aren't interested, as they want to keep a monopoly on their products. If you think about the millions of downloads, a few pence per hit would make a lot of money.

Funnily enough, something very similar is about to occur in the games industry. Online gaming is still in its infancy, and with the recent demise and rise of BarrysWorld, we're all resigned to the fact that pay-per-play is on its way. We just don't know when or who's going to make the first move. What is certain



The future of *Counter-Strike*: hoard and guard the cash.

though, is that there are going to be casualties before online gaming reaches maturity, and when it does grow up, companies with the rights to the most popular online games are going to coin it in, if they play their cards right.

Unfortunately, it appears that certain companies are looking to cash in before the market is ready. Havas, publisher of *Half-Life* and the immortal *Counter-Strike*, has decided that anyone using its multiplayer games and profiting from the ensuing carnage has to pay the company a licence fee.

This seems to be a bit premature. Havas knows that it has the gaming muscle in the shape of *Half-Life* and, more importantly, *Counter-Strike*, which is still the most popular game played over the Internet. What it seems to have forgotten is that LAN

cafés have done a great job of promoting all of its games for free. *CS* freaks who have become addicted by playing over a network aren't likely to go home and forget about it after-hours. It doesn't take a genius to realise that they are more likely to get themselves down the shops

“CS freaks who have become addicted by playing the game over a network are more likely to buy themselves a retail copy”

for a retail copy of *Counter-Strike* or *Half-Life*.

It also follows that if LAN centres are forced to pay a licence for each game, they'll probably only pay for the best – that is, *CS* – and consign every other release from the company to the incinerator. That can't be good business. Maybe they could offer some sort of supermarket scheme – buy

CS and get *Tribes* and *Gunman Chronicles* for free.

Anyway, who is actually making money from games like *CS*? Places like The Playing Fields are no-brainers, but what about services such as BarrysWorld? Effectively, services like this are making money through phone calls,

so does this mean they have to pay again for a game that's basically been championed by them and the rest of the online world in the first place? And isn't an extra charge more likely to force them out of business in testing times like this?

Obviously publishers such as Havas are run as a business and it's only right they should make money from their games.

However, surely it would be better to wait for a stable online gaming community or, even better, to initiate talks with all the big companies in a bid to introduce a pay-per-play scheme before charging for the licence?

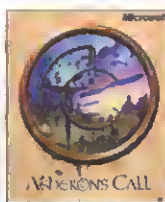
But the story could get much worse. *CS* is still a freely available mod – that's how it was intended and that's why it's so popular. But it can only be a matter of time before Havas decides that it can charge everyone for their next fix, thus effectively hooking the entire globe to a free taster, then demanding payment for the updates.

This is pure speculation, but is it paranoid fantasy or a viable business model? Remember *Gunman* started out as a free mod until someone realised they could get away with putting it in a box and selling it for cash money... [24]



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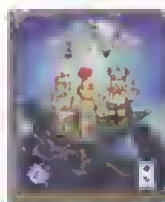
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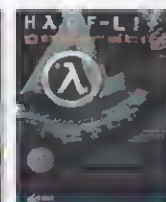
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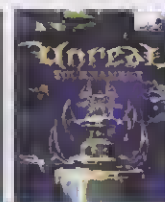
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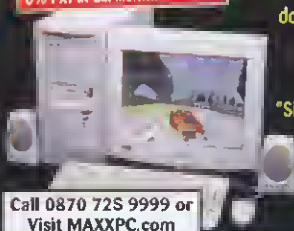
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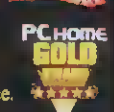
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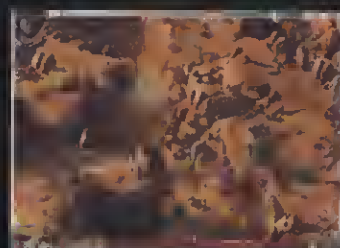
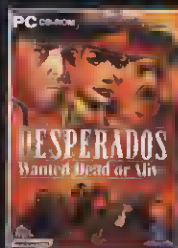
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